

PLUCK AND LUCK

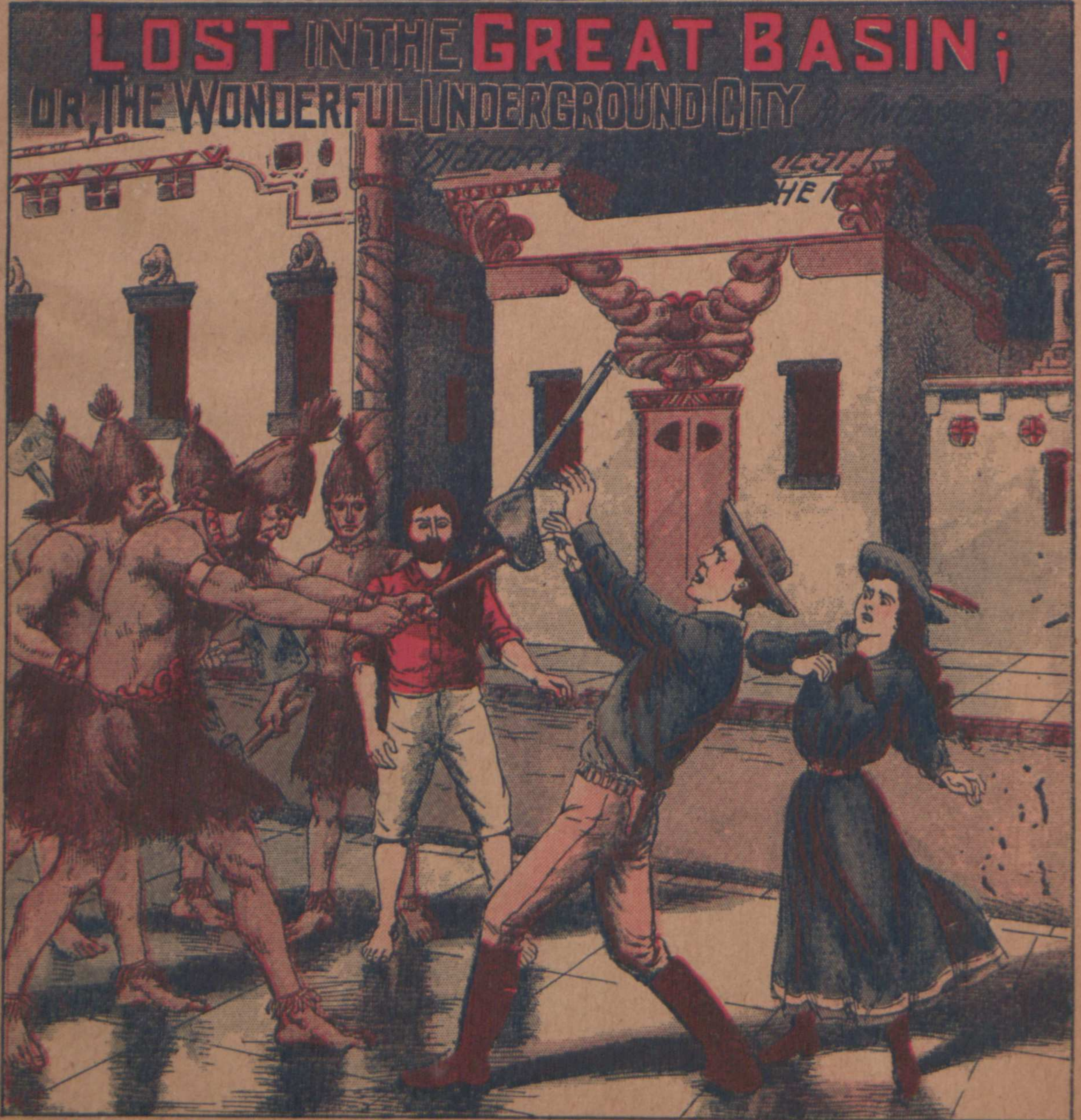
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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John Smith beseeched Jack to offer no resistance. But this was unnecessary, for one of the big warriors with a deft blow of his stone ax knocked the weapon from the boy's hands. The next moment all were seized and securely bound with stout thongs.

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Lost In the Great Basin

OR, THE WONDERFUL UNDERGROUND CITY

BY AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.—A Sharp Game.

"As sure as my name is Jack Holcombe, I believe there is a fortune awaiting the man who opens up Los Pinos mine. It will require a trip to Nevada, a little money, plenty of nerve and perseverance, and who ought to have more of those attributes than you and I, Arthur Harris?"

"Admitted, all save the money," replied Arthur, with a laugh. "But I think we have enough to last us, and to settle the question at once I will say—let us go."

"Then the matter is definitely settled, and you will undertake this perilous trip to the Great Basin with me?"

"I will do so."

The two boys clasped hands and each gazed earnestly into the eyes of the other. Arthur Harris was a handsome, open-faced young man of twenty-one years. His sole living relative was a widowed mother, and the income which supported them was meager indeed, yet Arthur always dressed well, and associated with boys of much higher standing than himself. For fifteen years Mrs. Harris had been a widow, having lost her life partner in a peculiar way. During the New Mexico gold fever and when Arthur was just six years of age, Mr. Harris had conceived the idea of seeking his fortune in the Wild West. He had never returned, the authentic report coming home that he had been murdered by the Indians. Arthur's chum, Jack Holcombe, had been reared far differently. Jack's mother had died when he was an infant. Mr. Holcombe was a broker in Wall Street, and a man of great wealth. But his business cares were such that he had been able to give little attention to the shaping of his boy's career.

"Jack is a good boy," he would say. "There is enough of his dear mother in him to always keep him so, and when he gets out of school I shall take him into the office."

Jack was in Arthur's graduating class at Columbia, and that same year he was roughly initiated into the practicalities of life by the mysterious death of his father, who was found upon the floor of his office with no mark of violence upon his body, and no good reason why sudden death should have come upon him. Yet he was dead, and upon the eve of a financial crisis. Many believed it was the shock of this discovery that killed him, for the morrow saw his vast fortune swept away by the tidal wave of

failure. Among his father's papers he had found the deed and plans of an unworked gold mine in Nevada. Fascinated with the thought he had taken his friend, Arthur Harris, into his confidence, and matters had gone so far that both boys had determined upon going West to explore, and, if possible, eke out a fortune out of the mine. Thus it is that we open our story with Arthur's final decision to accompany Jack Holcombe to the Great Basin. At first Mrs. Harris was averse to allowing Arthur to go, but argument at length over-ruled her fears.

The preparations made by the boys were enthusiastic, and yet based upon as good a plan as they could gain from the advice of people who had traveled in the West. They were provided with rough and ready hunting suits, Winchester rifles, pair of revolvers each, and hunting knives. Many minor articles went to make up the outfit, and finally the day of departure came. The plan was to go as far as Salt Lake City by rail, and then employ a skillful plainsman as guide. Thus far all had been clear sailing, and the boys had not even dreamed that their project was interfering with the plans or wishes of any other party. That such was the truth, however, a series of thrilling incidents that very day attested. It was in the early morning, and they were to leave New York on the evening train.

Jack Holcombe had stopped that night at Arthur Harris' house, that there might be no delay in the preparations. They were spending the morning hour with Mrs. Harris, preparatory to a somewhat sorrowful leavetaking of the devoted mother when a man came swiftly up the steps and rang the bell. Mrs. Harris went to the door. He was a tall man, with a sharp, foxy cast of features, and regarded the lady searchingly as he asked with some show of politeness:

"Is Mr. Jack Holcombe in?"

"He is," replied Mrs. Harris, with a vague, indefinable premonition of evil.

"My card," said the stranger, bowing again.

"I would like to see the young gentleman."

"Please walk in," returned the widow, politely.

"I will give him your card."

The man awaited Jack's answer in the reception-room. The card being handed to him, Jack read it with mystification:

"Mr. Lemuel Green, Detective."

"A detective," exclaimed young Holcombe, with wonderment. "What can he want with me?"

He exchanged wondering glances with Arthur and his mother. But the man was waiting, so he did not comment further, but entered the reception-room. Mr. Lemuel Green, the detective, bowed and smiled, while he regarded Jack with a sharp gaze.

"So this is Mr. Holcombe's son?" he exclaimed, sharply. "Well, you do bear a resemblance to your father, that is a fact. I am pained to learn that your father is dead. Of course, that brings my business to an end unless you wish to retain my services further."

"I retain your services?" exclaimed Jack, in sheer astonishment. "I do not understand you. Were you in my father's employ?"

"Certainly," replied the man, quickly. "Were you not aware of the fact. But I presume he may not have mentioned the matter to you, as it was a secret which he guarded closely."

"A secret!" cried Jack. "My father never had a secret from me."

The man laughed significantly.

"This was too important to tell his own mother," he declared. "I see you are ignorant of all. Ah, well, I may as well be explicit and state that it concerned the Los Pinos mine. You may never have heard of it, or in fact that your father owned a deed of that property before his death."

"If you refer to the Los Pinos gold mine in the great basin of Nevada I have to say that I am well aware of my father's ownership," replied Jack.

Lemuel Green gave a start of surprise.

"Why, that is fortunate!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands briskly. "It will not be so difficult to make you understand matters. A brief explanation upon my part is all that is necessary. Before your father's death I was sent by him to Nevada to track down a couple of rascally prospectors who had staked out claims upon the land, and were assuming lawful ownership of same by right of squatter sovereignty. Do you understand?"

Jack was deeply interested.

"Yes," he cried eagerly. "Then it is a rich mining section?"

"Rich!" exclaimed Lemuel Green, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I should say so. You can pick up nuggets as big as your fist in the gulches after a rain. How's that?"

"It is worth protecting," replied Jack, controlling himself with difficulty. "I think I understand all now. My father died while you were out there upon this errand."

"Exactly."

"What success did you have?"

"Success!" exclaimed Lemuel Green, with a peculiar snap of the eyes. "I never fail. I ousted the squatters and got judgment against them in the Nevada court. They tried to bribe me, even offering me a fortune if I would get the deed of the mine for them by a neat little trick, which consisted of representing to your father that Los Pinos was barren. It was the dream of your father's life to open that mine, my boy."

Jack reached forward and gripped the detective's hand. His eyes glistened earnestly.

"Yes, and it is left for me to carry out my father's cherished plan," he cried. "Mr. Green,

you have done well. No doubt before this you have learned that my father's fortune has been all swept away, and I am left with nothing save the deed of Los Pinos. I mean, though, that that shall be my fortune."

"Bravo!" cried Green, slapping his hands together. "You are the right stuff, and you will win. All it needs is development. By the way, there is a plan with that deed, is there not?" May I see it?"

Jack could see no good reason for a refusal of this request. He drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to the detective.

"Yes," replied Green, scanning the paper critically. "That is correct. You have got a bonanza. But you must go there, if you mean to work it."

"Myself and a friend will start to-night."

"To-night?" A queer expression flitted across Green's face. He looked up suddenly, and exclaimed in a hard voice and altered manner:

"Not to-night, my boy."

Jack was astonished.

"What do you mean?"

"I have need of you for the rest of the day."

"Please explain yourself," said Jack, in sheer amazement.

"Your father died suspiciously, did he not?"

A thunderbolt from the sky could not have given Jack a greater shock.

"Well," he exclaimed, hesitatingly, "there was no clear evidence of foul play, though there were suspicions of something of the sort. Certainly his death was mysterious as regarded cause."

"I thought so," declared Green, rubbing his hands in his peculiar way. "You see, I am a detective. My eyes and ears are always open, and it may be safely said that I never sleep. I am always on the watch, and I do not wish to give you any undue shock. Yet I think that I can safely assert that your father was murdered."

The effect of this upon Jack Holcombe it would be difficult to describe. His whole form quivered, and he exclaimed hoarsely:

"My father murdered! How do you know this?"

"Ah, I do not know it," replied Green. "I feel well assured of it, however, and that the murderers are at this moment in the city, and not far from this house."

"Who are they?" asked Jack, with pale face.

"The two men whom I forced to vacate the Los Pinos claim," replied Green, comprehensively. "They are a couple of Western desperadoes, and their names are Jem Hurd and Bill Bowman. I have been upon their track since coming back to the city, and I am well satisfied of the method employed by them to wreak vengeance upon your father. They visited him in his office, as I believe, and, failing to compromise with him, basely and treacherously murdered him."

"My God, this is awful!" gasped Jack. "They shall be brought to justice. My father's death shall be avenged by me. Where are the wretches? Tell me——"

Green put a hand upon his arm. His manner was excited and his eyes like stars.

"You are a boy of nerve!" he cried, excitedly. "I knew I could depend upon you. If you will go with me now I think we can put the wretches

behind bars to-day. They are to meet at eleven in a brothel known as the Sailors' Rest on the east side close down by the river. You can see their game. They will go West now and preempt this gold claim. It is for us to bag them now."

"I am with you," cried impulsive Jack Holcombe. "Lead the way and I will follow."

He started toward the door, but felt a touch upon his arm. Arthur Harris, pale and sympathetic, stood before him.

"I am going with you, Jack," he said.

Jack hesitated and glanced at Green, who gave a nod of approval. It required but a moment to don hats and leave the house without even waiting to explain matters to Mrs. Harris. In due time, under Green's piloting, they reached the Sailors' Rest, a bothel of the lowest order, and built close down by the wharves on East River. Just before reaching the place they halted, and the boys waited just under an awning, while the detective went ahead to investigate. He presently returned, excitedly saying:

"They are there! If you will follow me I will give you a glimpse of them."

Breathlessly the boys followed the detective along a narrow passage between the shambling buildings and paused before the cracked panes of a dilapidated window. Peering cautiously through, they saw the interior of a chamber or room, low-ceilinged and furnished with a table and chairs. At the table sat two men. One was dressed in the part habiliments of a plainsman, his hair falling down upon his shoulders from beneath a sombrero. His features were dark and evil. The second was a much larger man, a border ruffian of the worst type, and was known through the West as Bill Bowman, a notorious tough. The name given the other by Green was Jem Hurd. The two men were drinking and talking in a confidential way. As their conversation could not be heard, the boys were advised by Green to draw away from the window.

"Now for action," exclaimed the detective, producing manacles. "I am going in to arrest those villains."

"Alone?" exclaimed Jack Holcombe in a dubious tone. "Had we not better call the police?"

"And lose the honor of capturing two of the worst men in the United States?" exclaimed Green, excitedly. "Not much. I know my business and they will not dare resist. However, you may come with me, Jack Holcombe, and your friend may go around to the front entrance to give the alarm to the police in case I have trouble. Do you see?"

Neither of the boys left that this was just the safest sort of an arrangement, but not wishing to oppose the detective they complied. Jack and Green disappeared in the rear of the house and Arthur went around to the front entrance. Arrived there he noted the singular fact that the front windows and doors were closed and barricaded, and all had the appearance of having been recently closed out, which was indeed the case.

"That is queer," muttered Arthur, with a vague premonition of something wrong. "How did those rough-looking men get in there. This is not right. Can it be——"

A sudden, swift, horrible thought had flashed

over the boy. It drew a deep shudder from him, and he exclaimed:

"I wish a policeman was in sight. It is a bad neighborhood here. I think I will run around and tell Jack and the detective that these doors are barred. They could not have noticed that the place was closed up."

It required but a moment for him to slip quickly around to the rear of the shanty. A heap of old barrels and refuse lay before an open door. Arthur paused a moment. All was silence. Impelled by a power he could not resist he crept through the door and came suddenly and unexpectedly into the very room where he had seen the two Westerners sitting at the table. But they were not there now. The place was deserted, and a sight met the gaze of Arthur Harris which nigh drove reason from his brain. The two Westerners and Green the detective were gone, but the room bore signs of a terrible struggle. The floor and walls bore blood marks, and in the center of the floor a huge trapdoor was open, revealing beneath a sluggish, turbid current of water.

"Oh, my God!" gasped grief-stricken and horrified Arthur Harris. "It's all an awful plot. They have murdered Jack and thrown his body into the river, which comes up underneath this house."

CHAPTER II.—A Terrible Vendetta.

So petrified with horror was Arthur Harris at the terrible reflection that his chum and friend, Jack Holcombe, had been murdered and his body thrown down through the trap, that he was unable to move hand and foot for an interval of some moments. It was only with a powerful effort of the will that he brought himself out of the spell and made swift action. Jack's coat and hat lay upon the floor, and blood was upon them. This was prima facie evidence of foul play, and Arthur drew a deep, hard breath as he threw himself flat upon the floor and gazed down into the trap. There was a struggling hope uppermost in his bosom that his friend might have been alive when thrown into the water, and yet be clinging to some one of the wooden spiles upon which the house was built. That he was in the water was his earnest belief. But the swirling mass of water gave back no encouragement, and Arthur could not see beyond a radius of a few feet.

"Oh, Jack—Jack," he cried, wildly. "Are you alive? Speak if you are, for it is your friend, Arthur. I will help you."

No answer came back. Arthur sprang to his feet. He tried the door to the inner shop. It was fastened. There was little likelihood, however, that the villains were in there. Undoubtedly they had made their escape by the rear. Determined to know the truth, Arthur rushed out into the yard at the rear, and down upon the long wharf. Piles of lumber were there, among which the villains could easily have made an escape. Frantic with the awful horror of the thing, and grief for the loss of his friend, Arthur next ran out upon the wharf and began to shout for help, beckoning people upon a passing ferry-boat. Of course, the boat did not stop, but

some men in a skiff came up to the wharf. Arthur explained matters hurriedly, and one of the men sprang upon the wharf, and drawing back his coat lapel, revealed a silver star, saying:

"We are harbor detectives in disguise. Show us to the place."

Back to the Sailors' Rest Arthur led the way. The detectives examined the room and listened to Arthur's story, and one of them shook his head dubiously.

"I fear it is all up with the young man," he declared. "It was all a clever trap. They were careful to cover up their tracks. It is hardly likely that you will ever see them again."

"But what of Jack?" moaned Arthur, in his agony of spirit. "Oh, can there be a chance that he is alive yet?"

The detective was reflective a moment. Then he turned to his partner.

"This is an open wharf, and we can row under it. It can do no harm to take a look."

Back to the boat they went. They leaped into it and rowed under the wharf. Several minutes elapsed. Arthur was leaning over the edge of the wharf listening and waiting with the distraction of despair, when he heard a splash in the water, a gasping cry, and out from under the wharf, feebly struggling in the water, floated a human form.

"Jack!" cried Arthur Harris, wildly. "Jack! Thank God!"

But the white, blood-splashed face upturned in the light was death-like. Arthur did not wait, but off came hat and coat and shoes. One quick plunge into the water, and swimming nobly, he was by his friend's side. At the same moment the police boat shot out and boys were picked up. A few moments later they were upon the wharf and making strenuous efforts to resuscitate Jack, who lay in a deep swoon. It required but a brief examination to show that his wounds, while not necessarily fatal, were of a serious type. He had received several terrible blows upon the head and shoulders from which the blood flowed copiously. Meanwhile one of the detectives had gone for a medical man, and also to give the alarm at Police Headquarters. Very soon a surgeon arrived and under his skilled efforts Jack was brought back to his senses. Almost his first exclamation as he gazed about him was:

"The deed! They have got it!"

"The deed!" cried Arthur Harris, wildly. "That is it. It was all a dark plot to get the deed away from Jack. The scoundrels! They ought to be hung for it."

"What deed?" asked one of the officers, interestedly. And Arthur told the whole story of the gold mine, and its value and the previous efforts of Bowman and Hurd to get possession of it.

"Heavens, what a scheme!" exclaimed the officer. "Ah, well, my lads, keep a stiff upper lip. We may yet be able to get hold of the villains."

After Jack was removed to Arthur's home, where the party were met by horrified Mrs. Harris, and Jack was given the best of care. The alarm was given the police and officers were sent out to scour every part of the city. All search, however, was of no avail. The assailants of

Jack Holcombe could not be found. Jack's story was a thrilling one. Upon reaching the rear entrance of the place, it seemed by a preconcerted arrangement that the two desperadoes had secreted themselves in the outer room, and as Jack followed Lemuel Green into the place he was pounced upon by all three, Green being of course a traitor and a devoy. It was a clever trap, laid and worked to perfection. Of course, the plucky boy struggled bravely, but the odds were too great. He was knocked senseless, and after the deed and plan of the gold mine had been taken from his pocket, he was thrown into the river. The water, cold and stifling, brought him to, and he struck out to swim. He hung to the piles and made his way gradually to the edge of the wharf, where opportunely the boat was at hand. Of course, the boys did not leave that night for the West. For a week Jack Holcombe lay between life and death; then the fever turned, and he began to rapidly recover. Arthur Harris watched by his bedside devotedly through all. When at length Jack was able to sit up and converse, his chum asked:

"Well, Jack, our Western Plans all went askew, didn't they? What do you think of the idea of exploring the Great Basin now?"

Jack replied earnestly:

"There is all the more reason why I should go. I have made up my mind to regain that deed and claim Los Pinos mine, rightfully my own, if I have to risk my life."

Arthur Harris seized his hand.

"And I am with you, Jack, my boy. We will carry the fight right into the enemies' camp, and we will win, too."

It was a daring resolution. Neither of the boys fully realized what the perils of the undertaking were, what the real enormity of the task was, until it had been well undertaken. It was not quite clear to Jack Holcombe just how he was going to establish his lawful claim to the mine, now that the deed was gone, as in the early days of Nevada, when the deed and claim had been made, no adequate record was kept of such transactions. With the deed and plans of the mine in their possession, it would seem that Bowman and Hurd might open up the Los Pinos with immunity. There seemed but one way in Jack Holcombe's mind to assert his rights, to in some manner regain possession of the deed. Therefore the only practicable way was to go to Nevada the quickest possible route. This was decided upon.

Preparations were once more made to leave, and this time naught occurred to hinder the boys. A fast Chicago express took them westward a few days later, and after some tedious travel by rail and stage, during which time nothing worthy of note befell them, we find them in the frontier town of Bad Rock, Utah, and practically in the very edge of the Great Basin. Many of the boys' friends had offered to accompany them and render assistance in the gaining of their rights, but they had determined to go alone and depend upon their own muscle and shrewdness to win their way. This was really their wisest course. In Bad Rock the boys learned many very important facts. They learned that the laws of the country were somewhat at variance with the stringent and enforced statutes of the

East. In fact, save for the extreme crimes of horse stealing and cheating at cards, for which Judge Lynch provided the penalty, there was absolute freedom of speech and action, and in fact it may be said that the country was lawless.

Jack and Arthur learned very quickly that it was idle to think of depending upon the laws of the country for redress. There was no way but to fight it out alone. Their story, however, excited the interest and sympathy of the rough denizens of Bad Rock. The bluff miners all came forward and spoke rough, but kind, words and wished them success. One of them at least could tell the location of Los Pinos, and had visited the place. This was a gigantic, roughly-clad, but warm-hearted plainsman named Matt Melvin.

"Hang me for a coyote, boys, but I've taken a great fancy to you," he cried, in his hearty manner. "I know Bowman and Hurd, and they are a hard crowd. I'm mighty afeard if ye go up inter them hills alone that they'll fix ye. It would be like 'em. Now I'm going part way thar; jest a few miles t'other side of the desert thar's a place called Lone Cabin. It's my home, an' my Inez is waiting fer me now. I was ter start ter-day, an' as yer going much in the same direction we'll go along together if ye'd like."

"Indeed!" exclaimed both boys joyously. "We shall be glad to have you."

The boys at once became warm friends with Matt Melvin. He listened to their story of the clever trick to get possession of the deed with deep interest, and his soft brown eyes blazed with a light of indignation.

"If thar's one thing atop of the earth I hate it's a thief," he exclaimed. "I don't know as I ever saw this man Green, but I'll wager he is a snake."

"We are well satisfied of that," replied Jack Holcombe.

"In course," said Melvin, and he seemed thoughtful for a moment. "I'll tell ye what, boys," he continued, "if I find my Inez all safe, an' she'll agree to it, I'll guide ye up into the Los Pinos hills myself, and as sure as my name is Matt Melvin we'll spile their little game."

"You are kind," cried Jack Holcombe joyously. "You shall be well rewarded."

"Don't speak of that, or I'll git offended," said the plainsman, drawing himself up with dignity. "I never accept rewards, not from anybody."

"Pray, do not misunderstand me," pleaded Jack. "At least, you will have our undying gratitude in case you go. We hope that you will find your wife all safe."

Matt Melvin gave a start, and then a smile came over his face.

"Wife!" he exclaimed. "Well, I reckon Inez would laugh if she heard that. Ha, ha, ha! that is a good joke!"

"Excuse me if I have made a mistake," Jack hastily said.

"Oh, that's all right," replied the plainsman, though he kept chuckling in a manner which mystified the boys.

At the moment they were standing upon the green in front of the shanty hotel of the place, which was at once a bar-room, grocery store and hotel combined. Arthur Harris chanced to turn his gaze in that direction, and saw a man ride up and dismount from a horse. Not until the man's

face was turned fairly to him did Arthur experience anything more than idle interest. Then a wild, excited cry escaped his lips, and he clutched Jack Holcombe's arm.

"My God! Jack!" he exclaimed. "Look! Is not that——"

He paused, and his breath came hurriedly with the intense excitement, while Jack gave an awful start, and fairly screamed:

"It is he! It is Lemuel Green, the bogus detective, and the man who decoyed me into the death-trap in the Sailors' Rest!"

The man heard the words and gazed at the boys in seeming surprise. It was the same Lemuel Green who had played the part of detective and so villainously robbed Jack of the deed of the gold mine. For a moment no one made action. They were all, even Green himself, petrified with the shock of the encounter. Then Green's gaze turned to Matt Melvin, and a swift and awful ashen pallor settled down upon his face. Astonished at this, both boys turned and were held spellbound by the attitude of the giant plainsman. Melvin's eyes were like stars, and his face glowed with a fearful vengeful expression. There was no doubt but that he had recognized in Green a deadly foe. The two men glared at each other with such an expression as only men who fight to the death can assume. With slow but steady tread Melvin advanced straight toward Green. Then the giant plainsman's lips parted, and words came from them mechanically but forcibly.

"Jerry Dunham," he spoke in an awful voice, which seemed to cause the other to writhe in terror. "Fifteen long years have gone, and at last—at last, we are face to face."

Green recoiled with fear at first, and then this was superseded by a strange expression of cunning in his evil eyes.

"Well, what of it, Matt Melvin," he ejaculated. "Fifteen years ought to bury that. I am willing to say quits."

"Quits!" almost shrieked the plainsman. "Murderer! dare you speak to me of quits, when that hour which blasted my life is as fresh in my memory to-day as it was then? Never! I made an oath to revenge then over Irene's body, and I will keep it. It is the vendetta. Only your life or mine."

A huge bowie knife flashed in the plainsman's hand. He bared his arm and advanced toward Green as a challenge. But the villain laughed sardonically, made a move to draw his knife, threw honor to the winds, and drawing a pistol instead, fired point-blank at Melvin. With a gurgling dying cry the plainsman threw up his arms and fell upon his face.

CHAPTER III.—The Rescue.

Before any could make a move to prevent, Green had sprung upon his horse's back and was beyond pursuit. Horrified beyond measure, the boys advanced and bent down over the prostrate plainsman. He was unconscious at the moment. But men rushed out of the hotel, and Melvin was turned upon his back, and whisky being poured down his throat, to came to. But the stamp of

death was upon his face. Both Jack and Arthur were frantic, and demanded that a pursuit of the murderer should be made. The apathy of the miners stunned them. They were not as yet well enough versed in the ways of Western life to understand this. Duels, the result of private feuds were daily occurrences, and no one ever thought of pursuing the victor in the affair. The unwritten law supported by a code of honor indorsed a man in the shooting of a rival. Therefore no pursuit of Green was made. The matter was explained to Jack, who vigorously condemned such procedure.

"Common justice demands that he should be hung," cried the brave fellow, with all the courage of his convictions. "It is infamous."

But Matt Melvin, who heard him, raised one arm and beckoned to both of the boys, who came and knelt down over him. In a trembling voice he said:

"That bullet is in my vitals, boy. I've got to go. But before I go, may I presume upon your honor and generosity to fulfill a sacred mission for me?"

"Certainly," cried both boys.

"God will bless ye fer it, boys," continued the dying man. "It is a noble deed, and I could not safely call upon another here to do it. But I know ye are little gentlemen, an', more'n that, ye've got honor."

"We will certainly execute your wishes," assured Jack Holcombe.

"God bless ye! Well, my boys, first I'll have to tell ye a little story. Fifteen years ago in St. Louis, I married Irene Gray, the belle of the city. We lived together a year and were happy, and Irene gave me a darling baby girl. My joy was beyond expression, but at its very height, a human viper, a professed friend, crept in and broke up our little home. Yes, broke it up in a day. How did he do it? By a clever plot which involved my wife in seeming disgrace. I was hot-tempered, and we quarreled. I was in repentance and went to seek her, and found her dead—murdered by her traducer, who, failing to induce her to elope with him, had killed her."

Here Melvin choked, but a drop of the whisky revived him. He continued:

"Heartbroken, I left St. Louis and came into the wild West with my little Inez, my baby, and I have nurtured her tenderly; she has been my life and joy, and it will crush her when she knows my fate. Break it gently to her, boys. She is alone and friendless. Carry out the wishes of a dying man and befriend her—more, protect her from this fiend who will seek to crush her. She is now at Lone Cabin. He will go there direct. As you love your honor, as you are men of right, go there at once, save my Inez—promise me—care for her—oh—it is all over—I die—"

Matt Melvin was dead. The victim of heinous wrongs, the lone protector of a defenceless young girl was laid low by the bullet of a coward and a villain. With swelling hearts both boys clasped hands over the plainsman's dead body, and Jack Holcombe exclaimed:

"One more inviolable duty is added to our mission in this wild land, Arthur. We will execute this poor wronged man's wishes. Inez Melvin must be saved from the villainous machinations of Lemuel Green, alias Jerry Dunham."

"My heart is in it, Jack," cried Arthur.

The boys were deadly in earnest. A grave was dug on the prairie, and Matt Melvin was laid to rest in it. Then from the miners Jack learned the location of Lone Cabin, which was nothing more than a pony express station in the wilderness, and gaining this information they mounted horses which they had bought at a small price, and galloped away westward. When night came they were in the depth of the great American desert. We will not attempt to describe their mad ride across this, or their intense sufferings from thirst and the choking alkali dust. It was fortunate that they were obliged to cross but a small strip of it. Two days later they came into a more fertile country, and struck into a beaten trail, which they felt sure was the route to Lone Cabin. This was confirmed when a man suddenly swung into sight upon an Indian pony. He was riding furiously, and as he drew nearer the boys saw that he carried a mail-bag over his shoulder. He drew rein at sight of them, and Jack asked:

"Is this the trail to Lone Cabin?"

"Right ye are, stranger," replied the express rider. "It's ten miles further on. From the East, I take it?"

"Yes," replied Jack as spokesman. "But as you are from Lone Cabin, I may ask if you know Matt Melvin of that place?"

"Reckon I do," cried the express rider, with a sudden changing of countenance, "which makes me think that there is bad news for Matt."

Both boys gave a violent start.

"Bad news!" they gasped.

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"P'raps you won't understand it. You know Matt has a leetle gal up yere. She's as pooty as a picter, and the hull kentry is in love with her. He calls her Inez."

"My God!" cried Jack, "has harm come to her?"

"I dunno," was the reply, "but it is safe to reckon so. Little Inez has mysteriously disappeared and there's every reason to believe that she has been stolen away either by the Utes or some cantankerous white men."

"Too late!" exclaimed Jack and Arthur, in the same breath. "Oh, that is terrible!"

The express rider looked at them in the keenest of wonderment.

"What's up?" he asked, tersely.

"There is a villainous game afloat," declared Jack, impressively. "Matt Melvin has been murdered, and the same man, no doubt, has entrapped Inez, his daughter. It is an infamous outrage, and the whole country should uprise and hunt him down."

"Matt Melvin dead!" gasped the mail-rider. "My God! ye don't say so! Why, that'll stir up the whole West. I——"

He did not finish the sentence. A sudden series of rifle reports, blended nearly in one, crashed upon the air, and the mail-rider fell dead from his horse. The shots had come from a wooded covert to the right, and horrified, the boys turned to see a whole war party of the Ute Indians yelling and urging their ponies to the utmost, descending upon them. Fortunately, Jack and Arthur had escaped the volley, though their hats were perforated. There was but an instant of

time in which to act, and Jack Holcombe was just able to grasp it.

CHAPTER IV.—A Haunted Mine.

Neither of the boys had ever before met a body of Indians in war paint. The situation in which they found themselves can then very readily be imagined. The Utes, fierce and bloodthirsty, were not two hundred yards away. A second volley from their rifles might mean death to the boys. But Jack Holcombe, during his short stay in the West, had grasped the idea of immediate action. Quicker than a flash he struck Arthur's pony a savage blow and plunged spurs into his own. It was fortunate that they were close to a bend in the timber line which fringed the trail. It was the means of saving their lives, for they had just time to vanish around this and escape the second volley. As it was the bullets whistled uncomfortably near them but luckily missed them. Like the wind the two ponies carried their boy riders onward.

Quite a different story might have been the result had it not been for one fact. The horses ridden by the Utes were not as fresh as the ponies, and before they could round the timber and come once more in view of the boys, quite a gap had been opened up and every moment it was growing wider. Chagrined and enraged at what looked to the Utes like the certain escape of their intended victims, they lashed their horses to the utmost and kept up a lively fire as they rode. But the boys were now comfortably beyond rage, and soon shut their foes out of sight. They did not abate their speed, however, but kept on for miles at the swiftest gallop. Then Jack was the first to draw rein, and turning in his saddle he cried breathlessly:

"So much for our side, Arthur. But that was a close call all the same."

Arthur Harris shrugged his shoulders.

"I should say so," he replied, laconically. "There is a hole in my hat, two in my coat-sleeve, and one bullet knocked the skin off my shin bone. But I'm all right."

Nor did Jack wholly escape the storm of bullets. One was embedded in the horn of his saddle, and another had passed through his boot-leg. Both boys had good reason to feel very thankful for their almost miraculous preservation. Neither cared to pass again through a similar ordeal. Allowing their ponies to walk now, the boys indulged in conversation. They discussed the probable fate of Inez Melvin, the guide's daughter, and the blood tingled in the veins of each as it occurred to them her mysterious disappearance might be attributed to some villainous scheme of Jerry Dunham, alias Lemuel Green.

"I will just tell you how I feel about it, Arthur," said Jack resolutely. "I am disposed to track down that villain if I have to devote a lifetime to it. He should be brought to justice."

"I am with you," replied Arthur heartily. "I will stay in the West forever, if you wish me to."

"I knew I could depend upon you," exclaimed Jack gratefully. "Do you know, I think this man Dunham is a deeper rascal than we know him for. In fact——"

The two boys gazed steadily at each other. There was an expression of inquiry in Arthur's eyes.

"You don't mean, Jack, that he is likely connected with your father's murder?"

"I mean more than that," said Jack Holcombe with firmly set lips. "I really think that he is the very man who killed my father. There are many reasons why I entertain this belief. That he is hand-in-glove with Bowman and Hurd, his dastardly trick of leading me into that trap at the Sailors' Rest, fully decides me. I should judge him smarter than the other villains. They are, therefore, his tools; he is chief and beyond doubt my father's murderer. Before I die I will avenge my father."

Jack spoke calmly but resolutely, and there was an earnest light in his eyes which could not be mistaken. Arthur Harris was in full sympathy with him. Once more they gave their horses free rein and dashed on toward Lone Cabin. It seemed as though the trail which led to the small mining town was interminable, and an age had been endured by the boys, when at length they came out of a dense forest and beheld a collection of log cabins and board shanties before them. Lone Cabin did not boast of a large population, and such as did live there were practically isolated from the world, their only connecting link being the pony express and mail service, whose rider had just been killed and scalped by the Utes. But its denizens, hardly a score in number, were all congregated before the shanty which served as the express station. At sight of the two horsemen approaching, a great shout went up which reached the boys' ears and somewhat surprised them.

"They are giving us quite a welcome, Arthur," exclaimed Jack. "It must be that they take us for some personages of note. Perhaps a couple of United States marshals, come to aid in the looking up of Inez Melvin."

This was indeed the case. The Lone Cabin people had dispatched word by the luckless pony express rider to summons officers of the law from Bad Rock. They did not stop to think of the absurdity of the quick arrival of the same, for the express rider could not have reached Bad Rock himself in this brief space of time, to say nothing of the officers putting in such a speedy appearance. But crowds are never reasonable, and thus it was that they cheered lustily until the boys came near enough to undeceive them. It was not the pleasantest sort of welcome that our boys received from the Lone Cabinites, until they divulged the startling truth of the express rider's fate. This created a tremendous excitement. Jack and Arthur instantly became the center of attraction, and as they told the story of Matt Melvin's dastardly murder by Lemuel Green or Jerry Dunham, the popular sentiment became intense. Loud cries of vengeance arose, for both Matt Melvine and his pretty daughter, Inez, fitly called the Rose of Lone Cabin, were beloved by all.

"Every man out for the hunt," was the cry. "Jerry Dunham must hang before another day."

"Inez Melvin must be rescued. Hang the villain!"

"Hang him! Shoot him!"

Such was the fury of the Lone Cabinites, and

it was certain that they would have at once, to a man, started out upon the trail of the assassin and abductor had it not been for a tall, powerful plainsman known as Comanche Bill, who mounted a stump and addressed them in clarion tones:

"Hold on, every one of yer!" he cried. "Ye don't know what ye would do. Thar ain't no manner of use in ther hull gang of ye goin' onter ther trail. Lone Cabin is in danger itself. We want good men herè to purtect our wives an' leetle ones. You kin bet Comanche knows what he's talkin' about. This band of Utes, what these young men tell us about, are a part of Black Feather's gang, an' they're up hyar on a raid. If yer leave ther place unpurtected now, it are even up that ye'd come home to find Lone Cabin a smoke pile, an' yer wives an' leetle ones massacred. That's right!"

All listened to the powerful argument of Comanche Bill, deeply impressed with the fact that his were words of wisdom. That the Utes would take advantage of their absence to burn Lone Cabin was beyond doubt. Every man hesitated; the impulse was strong to go to the rescue of the pet of the settlement, which Inez had been from childhood; but upon the other hand stern duty was paramount. A murmur of disappointment ran through the crowd.

"Ye kin see that I'm right, gentlemen," continued Comanche Bill; "the lives of ther helpless ones at home are at stake."

"Right ye are, Bill!" was the general cry.

"But what shall we do about it?"

Jack Holcombe had listened to all with deepest interest. He now, with flashing eyes and bosom swelling with noble resolution, sprung up beside Comanche Bill.

"I will tell you what to do?" he cried. "Myself and partner are in the West for the purpose of gaining our right to the Los Pinos gold mine, the deed of which has been stolen from us by this rascal Jerry Dunham. It is, of course, the first duty of every one of you is to protect his home. If one of your most experienced men will consent to accompany us we will volunteer to go to the rescue of Inez Melvin."

For a moment after this speech a deep silence reigned; then gradually a burst of applause swelled upon the air. Instantly Comanche Bill turned and gazed critically at Jack.

"You are a newcomer here, I take it?" he asked, tersely.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"What do ye know about ther kentry? Nuthin', I reckon."

"I know very little," confessed Jack. "But with a good man like yourself to guide and direct us, I think we would accomplish something."

Comanche Bill smiled, though he did not seem displeased with the words and appearance of Jack Holcombe. He partly turned away, seemed to hesitate, and then said in a hurried way:

"Something has got ter be done sure. If yer really mean business, wait around here a half hour or so."

With this he disappeared in the crowd. The men now dispersed, some to the pony express station, where a new rider had arrived, others to different shanties about. Jack and Arthur were

left for a time quite alone. They exchanged questioning glances.

"The prospect is not very encouraging," said Jack, dubiously. "What do you think of it, Arthur?"

"I feel just as much determination as ever to attempt the overtaking of Lemuel Green and the rescue of Inez Melvin."

"Of course; but to tell the truth, I think the undertaking an enormous one unless we can secure the aid of some experienced man like this Comanche Bill. You see, we are greenhorns in a land thick with perils of the most intense sort. With our limited knowledge of the country we would be quite apt to be scalped by Utes before we had been out one day."

"There is little doubt of that," said Arthur, half gloomily. "But don't you think we can find some experienced man who will go with us?"

"It is my earnest hope that we can secure the co-operation of this man Comanche Bill."

"I would stake a good deal upon his ability," cried Arthur enthusiastically. "If he decides to go with us, or at least to take us with him, we will win and I know it."

The words had scarcely left the lips of Arthur Harris, when they saw the plainsman, Comanche Bill, approaching them with a quick step. He beckoned to the boys and all three met by the corner of the shanty which served as the pony express station. Comanche Bill scrutinized the boys closely.

"Ye look like right peart sort of boys," he said bluntly. "Tell me all about that gold mine, and what ye've got to do with it."

With this Jack clearly and concisely narrated all the facts concerning his claim to Los Pinos, and the rascally conspiracy of Bowman and Hurd whom he now believed to be but the tools of Jerry Dunham. Comanche Bill listened with deep interest.

"Waal, I swow!" he exclaimed at the finish, "if that don't beat all ther slick games I ever heard of. They're a pack of schemers, ain't they now? So Lemuel Green or Jerry Dunham played ther part of a detective, eh? Humph! I reckon it's a good thing we've come together, boys. I'm with ye heart an' hand. I know this yer Bowman and Hurd gang an' we'll spile ther cunning game. Los Pinos is a rich mine, but it's never bin worked on account of superstition that it is haunted."

"Haunted?" exclaimed both boys in chorus.

Comanche Bill nodded his head.

"Can't tell me anything about Los Pinos," he declared. "I've bin thar an' see ther ghosts with my own eyes. Thar's some hocus-pocus about it somewhar'. Tell ye what I think. Them ghosts comes up from ther center of ther earth."

The boys were astounded. Here was a daring, practical man like Comanche Bill, not afraid of a legion of savages, talking seriously to them about a haunted mine and ghosts! They could hardly believe their senses, and were disposed to regard the matter as all a huge joke. They gazed wonderingly at the plainsman.

"Do you really mean to say that Los Pinos is a haunted mine?" asked Jack in amazement.

"Sartin," replied Bill firmly. "What I see I must believe. I ain't superstitious, nuther, but thar's suthin' queer about it. Never mind! Wait

till ye see it yerself. P'raps Bill Bowman has got a scheme to beat ther ghosts, but he's smarter nor I think he is if he has."

"A haunted mine," exclaimed Jack Holcombe in a dazed way. "Pshaw; that is all nonsense."

"Do ye think so?" asked Comanche Bill with an odd glitter in his eyes. "Well, ye shall see the ghosts yerself. I'll take ye down thar directly ye will git ready."

"We are ready now," said Jack, turning to his horse.

"Ye can't go more'n two-thirds of ther way on hossback," declared Bill. "But that's all right. I know a good place ter leave ther critters. Waal, I'll jine ye directly. Ye'll see some queer things, for Los Pinos is right in ther heart of ther Great Basin, which are a pooty queer place, you bet."

With this Comanche Bill went for his horse, and left the boys in a wondering state of mind to await his return.

CHAPTER V.—On the Trail.

The assertion of Comanche Bill that Los Pinos was regarded as a haunted mine was a startling one to the boys. Of course both had too much good, practical sense to credit the thing.

"I never heard of anything so utterly absurd," exclaimed Arthur Harris, with something like disgust, "and only think that a man like Comanche Bill should actually believe it."

"It is some trickery of Jerry Dunham's," averred Jack. "We will very soon get at the bottom of that piece of moon-shine, depend upon it."

"You are right we will. There is no doubting the fact that Los Pinos is in the heart of the Great Bason, which explorers and naturalists all declare to be a weird, desert tract. No doubt we shall see many strange freaks of nature, but as for ghosts—faugh! Well, here comes Comanche Bill."

The news had spread that Comanche Bill and the two boy prospectors, if they should be called, were to go to the rescue of Inez Melvin. Instantly the whole population turned out to see them off and wish them Godspeed. Amid hearty cheers, the three brave rescuers put spurs to their horses and rode out of the place. Soon Lone Cabin and its collection of shanties had faded from sight, and the Little party of three, every hour now began to penetrate deeper into a section which became at every turn wilder and stranger than anything our boys had ever seen before.

Much is said about the wonders of the Yellowstone and the Yosemite, but there are unexplored parts of the Great Basin to-day, which nothing yet discovered can equal. There was a picturesque weirdness in the face of the country, a strange, unnatural look which might make one think that he was for the time upon quite another planet, Saturn, for example. The boys noted this with momentarily increasing wonderment and interest. Comanche Bill rode slightly in the advance leading the way, and was ever ready to explain some new wonder or strange place. There were several very good and logical reasons why Comanche Bill had decided to proceed at once to Los Pinos. The gold mine he be-

lieved to be the seat of operations of the villainous gang, of which, no doubt, Jerry Dunham was the ringleader. This was good basis for the belief also that, in or near the mine, the villains would have a hiding-place where Inez Melvin would be held a prisoner. What the motive of Dunham would be in holding the young girl, the daughter of his murdered rival and enemy, a captive, the reader can imagine. The real truth was that he had sworn to make a slave of the young girl, whose mother had rejected his suit in early life. Surely a despicable motive, and clearly showing the morbid hatred and deathless jealousy of his evil nature. This conclusion was arrived at concisely after some little discussion by the rescuers. There was but a forlorn hope of success, yet they clung to it.

"We can do no more than try," declared Jack Holcombe.

"Yes," agreed Comanche Bill, "and if we don't succeed, we have but one duty left, and that a stern one of vengeance."

Altogether, it was with the deepest of resolution that they rode onward. Deeper and deeper into the heart of the Great Basin they rode. For three days and nights they kept on, and then came out upon a desert waste of sand and sagebrush some miles in extent. Suddenly Comanche Bill dropped from the horse and cried:

"A trail!"

Sure enough, in the sand were the imprints of horses' feet, as well as those of men. The experienced plainsman made a critical examination of them, and a puzzled light shone in his eyes. The boys watched him eagerly, curiously, and Jack finally asked:

"Well, Comanche, what do you think of it?"

Comanche Bill indulged in a deep breath, and made reply slowly:

"I am a leetle mite puzzled about these 'ere signs. Thar's a party of full twenty white men have passed along this way, goin' south'ard. Ha, I've got it!"

In a twinkling the scout's face lighted up. He slapped his hands vigorously and continued:

"As sure as my name is Comanche Bill, it's Bowman and Hurd's party making to open up that Los Pinos mine. Hooray! That's luck fer us that we've hit ther trail."

Jack and Arthur were so excited that they nearly dropped from their horses.

"Do you really believe it, Bill?" asked Jack.

"Believe it! Don't I know it fer a solemn fact? Leave me alone fer that. I kin see ther game—Bowman and his pal has run down a band of pirates from Big Bend up fifty miles above hyar. They're the wust pizen lot of rogues on record. Great Cesar; here's a bad go!"

The scout fell upon his knees with this exclamation and examined a tiny footprint in the sand, the impression of a feminine foot. Both Jack and Arthur saw it exchanged glances and for a moment silence ensued.

"That are a bad one," said Comanche Bill at length. "Without any kind of doubt that are ther foot-track of leetle Inez Melvin. Ugh! She's in bad company fer a fact. It looks as if she was like to stay there fer all of us, for three agin twenty are powerful odds."

The scout remounted his horse, and they pushed

forward now, following the trail with ease across the desert. For a distance of ten miles they rode on thus, and then the sand began to merge into a less barren tract with harder, more rocky soil. Also deep chasms yawned before them, and it soon became difficult to proceed with safety except on foot, so rocky and irregular was the face of the country. Comanche Bill drew rein.

"Waal!" he exclaimed abruptly, "this are ther beginning of what we call the Big Basin, an' ther source of Mule River. We kain't go on comfortably any further with hosses."

The trail of Bowman and Hurd's gang had been lost at once entering the barren tract. What they had done with their horses was a mystery.

"Do you think they have gone on to Los Pinos mine?" asked Jack.

"Of course I do," replied Comanche. "They've corraled their horses in some safe place, an' that's what we must do." The scout got his bearings carefully and then led the way at a swift gallop along the edge of the desert for something over a couple of miles. Here a narrow pass between high hills was revealed. Into this the scout galloped, and merged into a valley of some fertility. He dismounted, and in a trice had thrown off saddle and bridle and given his horse freedom.

"They won't go away from here," he declared, motioning the boys to do the same. "It's ther only green spot within miles of here."

Thus the horses were left in the small valley, and now on foot the three rescuers struck out to penetrate into the very center of the Big Basin. To attempt description of the scene spread before them would be beyond the power of author's pen. Upon every hand were deep canyons, mighty gorges and precipitous descents. Anon they would come to mighty level expanses of sand and marl, vast plains of barrenness and desolation. The scenes about them impressed the boys deeply.

"I should fancy myself approaching the entrance to Dante's Inferno," declared Jack Holcombe. "This would require but little stretch of the imagination to supply the actual reality."

"Where could one look for gold here?" exclaimed Arthur, with a disdainful shrug of his shoulders.

"And yet thar's one of ther richest gold claims in ther West in the heart of this region," declared Comanche Bill. "Ye can't allus tell by appearances, ye know. Los Pinos is in the deepest part of this region."

"One question, Bill," exclaimed Jack Holcombe. "Why was the mine called Los Pinos?"

Comanche Bill laughed quietly.

"Waal, that does seem an odd game, don't it?" he said. "But it's a fit one. Ther mine is right in the side of a hill. Thar's a canyon into which Mule River runs. Right over it stands a lone pine tree. It's ther only tree of any kind within forty or fifty miles. A Spaniard, Don Jose Sabina, discovered the mine first and named it arter ther tree ther Lost Pine. Do you see?"

"Is not that wonderful?" exclaimed the boys in chorus. "Do you know," rejoined Jack, "I am disposed to regard that Lost Pine as an omen of good luck. Who knows but it may become the rival of the great Comstock yet."

Comanche Bill chuckled.

"Thar ain't any doubt of that," he agreed, "if ye kin only circumvent the ghosts."

"There it is again!" exclaimed Jack impatiently. "I hope you are not so foolish, Comanche Bill, as to believe in ghosts."

The guide shrugged his shoulders.

"What I see with my own eyes I must kinder take fer facts," he said doggedly.

It was of no use to argue with the old scout. He declared firmly that he had seen ghosts in the Mule River Canyon, and that they had hitherto frightened away everybody who had attempted to open up the mine.

"Nevertheless, Bowman and Hurd with their gang don't seem disposed to fear them," insinuated Jack, with a laugh which nettled Comanche Bill.

"All right," growled the scout. "Wait till they see 'em as I did an' I reckon they'll git up an' git out."

Darkness was now coming on rapidly. They had traveled far that day and in a laborious way, climbing over rough cliffs and boulders. All were tired and hailed the finding of a suitable place to camp upon the banks of a rushing stream with joy. A fire was built of a few pieces of driftwood found upon the river bank, and Bill caught a few fish in the river which were roasted and eaten with avidity by all. Sitting about the fire, some while later, various topics were discussed, and the boys were both growing exceedingly drowsy when some impulse prompted Comanche Bill to start up and say:

"I think I will take a leetle turn over the ridge thar. I'll be back soon."

He strode away over the rocky rise and was out of sight. Neither Jack nor Arthur dreamed of the calamity so near at hand. Presently Jack's head dropped upon his breast, and with a sudden yawn he stretched himself out, and was in a trice fast asleep. Arthur followed his example a moment later. When the boys awoke it was daylight. Jack was the first to arouse, and he was not particularly alarmed when he saw that the old scout was not present.

"He must have gone off for a morning walk," he concluded. "He will be back soon."

With this he went down to the river fishing. It was not until a full hour later, when both boys were preparing the breakfast, that a suspicion dawned upon them that old Comanche Bill had not returned since the previous night, and therefore must have met with some mishap. The full horror of such a possibility dawned upon them with fearful force. Aghast each looked at the other.

"Do you think it possible, Jack, that anything has happened to Bill?" asked Arthur, with pale face and a look of horror.

"I don't know," was all that Jack Holcombe could say. The boys lost no time, but instituted a search. Not a trace of the old scout could they find. They became satisfied that he had not returned since leaving the camp the night before. His absence was a most profound mystery. It placed the boys, of course, in a position not easily described by words. The heart of each beat wildly as they realized that without Comanche Bill they were like a ship without a rudder—alone in a vast waste with which they were not familiar,

many hundreds of miles from civilization in the secluded fastnesses of the Great Basin of North America. To find their way out, to hope to reach civilization in safety with their limited knowledge of the region and its dangers seemed an utter impossibility.

But now the boys set out to find Comanche Bill if it were a possible thing. They soon came upon his trail and followed it, only to find it end suddenly on what looked like the edge of a vast hole or crater in the plain. Had he fallen into this and gone to his death? The boys shouted down into the hole, but no answer came back. After a while they returned sadly back to the camp. They held a consultation as to what would be their next move, and came to the conclusion to go ahead in their search for the Los Pinos mine. So they set out and trudged all day, and as dusk fell they found themselves among vast boulders and mighty precipices and canyons, with no prospect of getting anywhere. In fact, they realized they were practically lost. They resolved to retrace their steps back to their camp, but after proceeding for an hour longer they found themselves completely baffled to find their way to the camp. Almost exhausted they lay down close to a canyon wall and prepared to pass the night. They were just beginning to doze when Jack woke up with a sudden cry. Arthur was awake in an instant.

Both boys now heard voices raised in an excited discussion, and rose to their feet. Nearer came the sound, and then a wild shriek in a female voice. Looking up, they saw the swaying form of a young girl upon the canyon wall, twenty feet above them. Not ten yards from her and approaching swiftly, were a couple of men. The girl, just as the men were about to grasp her, leaped out and down into the river at the foot of the wall. Jack immediately recognized one of the ruffians as Jerry Dunham, and he felt sure the girl was Inez Melvin.

Jack acted in an instant. Fastening one end of his lariat around his chest, he threw the other end to Arthur and sprang into the current. It did not take Jack long to reach the girl's side, grab her, and call to Arthur to pull them ashore. This Arthur did with great haste.

In the meantime the villains, by the orders of Dunham, were swimming across. Jack perceived them and realized what was likely to happen, so he told Arthur to take the girl and retreat to an angle in the wall. Dunham perceived what they were about to do and called to them to halt or he would blow them full of holes. Jack now raised his rifle, took quick aim and fired. The bullet sped true to its mark and Dunham dropped his rifle and tumbled headlong from the ledge and fell with a splash into the river. He was not killed, however, only a wound in the leg, and the villains dragged him out of the water and onto dry land. But he was in a terrible rage and vowed all kinds of vengeance on the boys, who had by this time gained the angle in the wall and were out of sight. Not stopping they ran on until they came to a gorge, and here under an overhanging rock they crouched to await daylight. Inez slept a little, but the boys never closed their eyes until daylight came.

Then a consultation was held and Inez explained how she had been captured and also how

she had been able to elude her guards and run to the ledge and jump into the river when the two boys had seen her. Then Jack told of their experiences and also the sad news of the death of her father. It took the girl hard and she sobbed for a long time, but at last brightened up enough to say what had happened had to be, she supposed, and she must make the best of it, and from that moment she was herself again.

They passed the day and another night there and the next morning set out to find their way out of the region.

They came across several specimens of ancient headgear and it made the boys remember the remarks of Comanche Bill about the haunted mine and the idea struck them that there might be a race of people there who inhabited the underground caverns. Shortly they came across a strange looking object in the water, shaped somewhat like a canoe. Examining it, the boys came to the conclusion it must be meant for a boat by some strange set of people and they resolved to take it and see where they would bring up. So Inez was helped in, a pole was found on the shore, and in a little while the girl and boys were floating with the current—where?

The current gained strength and after a while the boat was fairly racing down the gorge. The gorge was now getting narrower and in a little while a distant roar was heard.

Jack Holcombe now sprang up and cried:

"My God, I believe we are doomed to die!"

This seemed to be true, for the canyon walls now appeared to meet at the top and a cavern-like opening appeared just ahead. As the boat entered the opening it struck an obstruction of some kind and Arthur, who was standing up, was thrown overboard. Jack gave a cry and Inez screamed, but nothing could be done to help Arthur, for then the boat shot into intense darkness and swept on.

CHAPTER VI.—Captured by the Enemy.

Arthur Harris had instantly vanished from the sight of Jack and Inez in the boat, and they were well warranted in the belief that he was drowned. But it was not destined that such a horrible fate should overtake the brave lad. By the action of the eddying waters he was swept across the stream, some feet under the surface, and when he came up, it was in a still pool of water under an overhanging ledge. This was why he was not seen again by his friends, and when he was enabled to dash the water from his eyes and look about him, the boat was not in sight. The water where he was could not be less than ten feet deep. To float on down the stream was to be dashed to death upon the jagged rocks by the forceful current. Despair overwhelmed the boy.

"I am lost!" he exclaimed bitterly.

The ledge of rock under which he had drifted marked an angle in the wall. Right here two sections of the mighty rock wall united, and a long crevice, not at once distinguishable, extended hundreds of feet upward. Not until this moment had Arthur become aware of the existence of this crevice. At the sight of it now he experienced a mighty thrill of hope and joy. It was

but an instant's work to reach up and seize the ledge of rock. He swung himself upward, and hundreds of feet upward. Not until this moment it was a question whether he could squeeze himself through or not. Had he been a large or fat boy there was no doubt but that he would have had serious trouble. But as it was he met with success. Ten feet higher up in no place was the crevice less than two feet broad, and by planting his hands and feet against small projections, Arthur managed to slowly make his way upward.

Up he went until the canyon stream looked like a brook, so far below him was it, and then faint and exhausted the brave boy drew himself out upon the level ground. He was saved. He lay prostrate for some moments, until able to recover his strength. Then he finally arose to his feet and staggered away from the canyon edge with a shudder. His first impulse was to follow the stream down for some distance, hoping to catch sight of Jack and Inez. But of course he did not see them. Then Arthur did what he considered was the next best thing for him to do. This was to return to the place where they had left their effects before starting out upon the unfortunate boat ride. It did not take him long to reach the opposite side of the river from the camp. Without hesitation he leaped in and swam across, for the water here lay in a deep, quiet pool. Everything was just as they had left it. By a queer chance Jack had his rifle with him, having had it strapped to his back. Fortunately, also, Arthur had left his behind, and now recovered it, safe from a wetting.

After all, it was possible that the affair might not turn out so badly as feared, he mentally reflected. If Jack and Inez rode through the canyon rapids safely, all would be well with them. But this did not restrain Arthur from yielding to an impulse to follow the stream down and ascertain, if possible what had been their fate. This necessitated some rough climbing over the rocky steeps, but Arthur persisted in his efforts until he came to a diverging ridge of rock, which he was unable to surmount. This involved a detour of some miles before he could regain the canyon river again. In fact, he did not again succeed in this, although he was not aware of his mistake. The truth was, the river turned sharply to the westward, and another stream ran the other side of the height and pursued the southerly course. It was this second stream which deceived Arthur after having surmounted the steep height. Therefore he remained in ignorance of the fate of Jack and Inez, for, taking this for the same river, he followed it on for hours until it ran out into a desolate valley. Just under the spur of a mountain Arthur, intensely wearied, came to a halt. He set down upon a shelf of rock, and for a few minutes the whole world looked dark and desolate. But Arthur's nature was of the buoyant kind, and he did not long yield to this feeling. Gradually he put it aside. Then his gaze wandered about the face of the country in a more retentive way, and for the first time he caught sight of an object which caused his heart a wild leap. Not a quarter of a mile down the canyon, and the top of which was visible above the eminence, was a lone pine tree. Not another shrub or sign of vegetation of any kind was about. Only one

thought was coursing through the mind of Arthur Harris, and that was upon his lips instantly:

"Los Pinos at last."

Everything tended to warrant the supposition that this was indeed the region of the lost gold mine of the Great Basin. Arthur Harris was so excited that he actually sprung to his feet and began to examine the ground for signs of the precious mineral. Then an intense feeling of disappointment came to him. Los Pinos was found, but his chum, Jack Holcombe and the lawful owner, was not with him to participate in the joy of the discovery. Then Arthur suddenly remembered that Bowman and Hurd had, without doubt, already begun mining operations at Los Pinos. This instilled caution into his breast, and he approached the spot with every nerve upon the quiver. It proved that this was most warrantable prudence, for before he reached the bend in the canyon he heard the distant ring of hammers and the high-pitched voices of men at work. A few moments later Arthur had managed to reach an unobserved position, from which he gazed down upon a scene most strange in that wild region.

Fifty or more men were engaged in the erection of a portable quartz mill, such as is used in the mines. Tents adorned the plateau, and the miners were even at work in the side of the hill with drill and blast, as well as pick and shovel. Bowman and Hurd had certainly begun operations in spite of the fact that Los Pinos mine was the property of the Holcombes. Unscrupulous men that they were, little they cared for the slight matter of lawful ownership. Arthur's position was, he fancied, quite secure. Some fatality, however, had so arranged it that he was in the direct path of a body of rough-looking men who were coming up in his rear, and whom he did not hear until they were almost upon him and had discovered his presence. Too late Arthur recognized them, and made an attempt to beat a retreat. The villain Jerry Dunham, upon a crutch, was in the van, and shouted in angry triumph:

"Head the young cub off! Don't let him escape! By the fiends, I'll have revenge now! He is one of the young rascals who gave me this lame leg. Curse him! A hundred dollars to the man who catches him!"

Arthur had started to retreat, but the men closed in upon him, and before he could make actual resistance he was overpowered and made a prisoner.

CHAPTER VII.—The Wonderful Cave.

So quickly was this done that Arthur had scarcely time to realize his misfortune until he was securely bound and helpless. The fiendish triumph of Jerry Dunham was terrible to witness. By Dunham's orders he was led down to the mining camp below. They were met by both Bill Bowman and Jem Hurd, who were at work opening up the mine and organizing the men. These two villains seemed equally as well pleased as Dunham at the capture of Arthur Harris. The boy was now led into a small cave in the side of the hill, where he was left to himself, the entrance being guarded by a man with a revolver. His wrists yet remained bound, and he suffered

considerable pain with the tightness of the thongs. The cave was some twenty-five feet in depth, and had evidently once been the den of a family of bears, for there was a prodigious nest of leaves in one corner. It was used temporarily by Bowman and Hurd as their sleeping place at night. Arthur sat for some while upon a slab of stone, communing with his thoughts. He knew that he was hopelessly a prisoner, but what prisoner ever yet did not dream of escape. An inmate of the cave Arthur felt that his chances were small. He had the use of his legs and might make a dash for liberty into the outer air, but this would induce the almost absolute certainty of being shot down by the guard. He did not care to take this chance. As he sat there, the boy's gaze roamed instinctively about the rocky chamber. An almost hopeless idea had occurred to him that this cavern might possibly have some other and a secret exit. The lower end was choked up with leaves and grasses deposited there by its former occupants, the bears. An uncontrollable impulse seized him to attempt the removal of this obstruction. But in order to do this successfully he had need of his hands. This suggested a scheme by which he might gain their liberation.

The edge of the rock upon which he sat was sharp and, bringing the cords to bear upon it, he made a desperate effort to break them. In the end he succeeded. By dint of much sawing and working he managed to free his hands. With wildly beating heart and hardly daring to hope for such good fortune, he started for the lower end of the cave. As he began to pull away the pile of leaves he saw that they evidently formed an obstruction to a continuation of the passage, of course much less in circumference, yet nevertheless a continuation. He worked with all his strength pulling away the leaves, until the opening was large enough to admit of the passage of his body. Then without an instant's hesitation he crawled into it.

All was blackness before him, and it was with difficulty that he found his way along a circuitous passage which would barely admit his body. But after a while the passage widened, and he suddenly came out into a clear space where he could stand erect, and where the roof must be so high that he could not touch it with his hands. All was intense blackness. Hardly daring to go further with this uncertainty, he bethought himself of a small case of wax tapers which he carried in an inner pocket. In an instant he had lighted one of these, and the small light thus afforded showed him beyond doubt that he was in a large, high-roofed chamber.

The roof and wall were profuse with long stalactites, and the light flashed against these with much brilliancy. Arthur did not hesitate to cross the chamber, and from this passed through others. In this way he kept on until it seemed as if he must have traveled a mile. Then he entered a long passage ever trending downward. Arthur was hoping every minute that he might come to another exit from this wonderful cavern; but the further he went the deeper and more winding the place became. Yet he did not lose courage and kept on, until suddenly turning an angle a dull, thunderous sound burst upon his hearing, followed by a trembling of the cavern

walls, which inspired him with a sudden and awful terror.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Underground Country.

It is not easy to describe the emotions of Jack Holcombe and Inez Melvin as they were so suddenly swept downward beneath the earth's surface upon the bosom of the underground river. The gravity of their situation was beyond conception. This can only be felt wholly to the reader's imagination. On they were swept into utter darkness, the frail boat being tossed about like an egg shell upon the surging waters. With the velocity of the wind they pursued their downward course into the bowels of the earth. Now they turned a sharp angle in the cavern, were hovering for a moment at the head of awful rapids, and then the roof of the underground passage lowered so that they were obliged to kneel in the boat to escape dashing their brains out against the ragged rocks above. All was darkness at times; then would come a fitful glimmer of light. It seemed to the two young people as though their fate was irrevocably sealed. Yet there was hope. Were it not for the beautiful anchor emblem, how often would the weary heart faint and sicken unto death! It might be that the passage would bring them out again ultimately into the light of day. To this hope Jack Holcombe clung. With his arm about Inez to support her, he clung to the boat and breathed prayers for safety. Inez clung shivering to him. At length they came to a clear space of water, where the light craft rode more steadily. For the first time in many minutes Jack spoke.

"I have a belief that we will yet come out all right, Inez," he declared, "provided the boat holds out. This may be only a passage of the river for some distance underground to emerge all safely in some distant part of the Great Basin."

"It is our only hope," agreed Inez. "Yet I have heard my father say that there are rivers in the Great Basin which disappear in the earth, and no man knows where they empty. If this is one of them, then we are indeed lost."

"We will not have it so. Fate will not be so cruel to us, Inez."

"But where can these mysterious rivers of the Great Basin empty? Is not that a problem?"

"Ay, and one of no mean sort," replied Jack then with a grim humor. "But it looks as though you and I were in to solve it, Inez."

In spite of the peril of their situation Inez laughed at this. The spirits of the young people arose wonderfully. The boat was now riding more evenly. Had such a thing been possible Jack would have attempted to ascertain whether they were yet in the passage, or, as he strongly suspected, in a mighty underground chamber. But it was so dark as to preclude anything of this kind. Moreover, the young prospector felt that it might be as well perhaps to trust to the river and fortune to bring them through all safely in the end. It seemed as though a year had passed; in reality not more than two hours; and Jack and Inez were both in a state of exhaustion, when a startling thing happened. Thus far they had been in utter darkness. Now Jack said

denly sprung up with a mighty cry. Amazement and terror were blended in that cry. He seized Inez closer, and both gazed through the darkness. A strange, luminous light was visible through the gloom, a light such as they had never seen before. The boat was being swept toward this. It was not the light of day, as it is known on the face of the earth, but a strange, unearthly radiance, which Jack could associate with but one thing, and that was the awful seeming certainty that they were being swept into the fires of an infernal volcano.

"Oh, my God! We are lost, Inez!" he cried.

Then he drew a stifling cry, for the young girl lay back limply in his arms in a dead faint. Jack clasped her closer to him and sank down in the boat, closing his eyes and awaiting heroically the death which he believed must shortly come. How long he sat thus, in a half-unconscious state, he never knew. But he was suddenly aroused by the sudden stillness about him, the absence of the thunderous roar of the waters, and the gentle rocking of the boat. With an effort he lifted his eyes, and the scene which they beheld was so wonderful that he sprung up with a wild cry. All was light about him—a strange luminous radiance, which for a time pained his eyes. The boat rocked peacefully in a pool of water in the bend of the river's shore. The mighty stream itself flowed calmly between banks overhung with trees and carpeted with grass. But wonder upon wonder, such vegetation it was as Jack Holcombe had never seen before nor ever dreamed of.

"Great heavens! the most wonderful of all discoveries, an underground country with vegetation of its own. Hurrah! This is positively grand."

Jack was enabled to easily wade ashore, and drew the canoe up on the sand. His first duty was to restore Inez to consciousness. This was not difficult, a few dashes of water in her face bringing her to. Then Jack wet her lips with liquor from a flask, which he fortunately carried. This revived her wonderfully, and she very soon became herself again. Her astonishment was unspeakable when she realized what were her surroundings. She walked out upon the land with Jack, and exclamations of intense wonderment constantly dropped from her lips. The strange peculiarities of the underground country were a revelation to both. The boat was drawn up high and dry, and Jack, with his rifle under his arm and Inez by his side, started out upon an exploring tour.

Small animals, such as gophers and white rabbits scampered about in all directions. After walking about for a while they retraced their steps and again entered their boat and floated along with the current. They had just rounded a bend in the river when they perceived to their horror a large boat approaching them containing a number of people looking like savages, so scantily were they dressed. As soon as they were seen the occupants of the boat set up wild cries and immediately paddled for our friends. Coming up to their boat they made fast with a thong and paddled ashore, where our friends were made known that they were prisoners. Jack and Inez took everything coolly. Shortly their captors led them through an underground city which was

really magnificent in its buildings and finally conducted them to their king, a very large man. Jack and Inez, to their astonishment, were received somewhat with awe by the pontiff and motions made for them to follow with his train of court followers; finally they were conducted to a large square, in the centre of which was a polished pedestal, upon which a seat was being arranged. The king mounted the pedestal and sat in the seat. A man was then called, who proved to be an interpreter, and who said:

"God be praised, I am enable to once more gaze upon the form and features of one of my own people!"

Then turning to Jack, he told him he was there to intercede for him and Inez's lives, and said that the king Mozano, seldom allowed a foreigner to enter this region and live. But the man said he would do his best to save them.

CHAPTER IX.—A Desperate Situation.

Arthur Harris had but one thought when he came suddenly upon the dull, roaring noise of distant thunder, and this was that the cavern was about to fall in and bury him alive beneath some mighty earthquake or other convulsion of nature. But a few moments of sober reflection undeceived him. The roaring continued and satisfied him that it came from some distant fall of water, whether in the cavern or upon the ground above he had no means of knowing. But he became possessed of a determination to find out. Therefore he started down the cavern in the direction of the sound. Very soon he came upon the object of his quest. As far as he could see in the light of his taper, an underground river flowed through the cavern. The waterfall was full twenty feet high, and a large volume of water fell over it. It was a wonderful sight to the boy prospector. He remained gazing at it for some time, and so loud was the noise that he was not warned of a deadly danger approaching in his rear until it was almost upon him. His escape had been discovered but a very few minutes afterward by Dunham himself. The villain instantly summoned his men, and started in pursuit. Indeed, what had seemed to Dunham like a calamity at first now seemed like to turn to their advantage.

"Ye see, boys," he declared fiendishly, as he hobbled onward with the others, "it will be a mighty good chance fer us. We can swear we couldn't find the boy in here. We can give him the cold shift, and nobody will be any the wiser."

Bill Bowman had a dark lantern, and by the light of this they dashed through the cavern arches in hot pursuit of Arthur Harris. So it happened that just as Arthur turned from the cataract, he chanced to glance over his shoulder, and was almost petrified with fear and horror to see his foes close upon him. They were not one hundred feet distant, and had a full view of the boy. In an instant Arthur started to fly. A bullet whistled past the boy's head. But it did not check him. On he sped into the darkness, not knowing where his footsteps carried, and after him came the dread pursuers. To be overtaken he well knew was death.

Therefore it was with an energy born of despair that Arthur kept on his course. Deeper and deeper into the cavern he ran, and for a time his foes seemed to gain upon him. Then he turned an angle in the cave, and for a time lost sight of them. Arthur was greatly exhausted, and obliged to halt for rest. How far he had penetrated into the cavern he could not guess. That it was a great ways he felt assured. Anything—even to be lost underground—was preferable of being captured by the villains. For some while Arthur lay upon the bank of the underground river, and then exhausted nature began to assert herself, and he waxed drowsy. His eyelids closed, it was impossible to resist the impulse, and he soon fell asleep. His couch was not by any means a soft one, yet he slept soundly, and was completely oblivious of all about him. How long he slept he never knew, but he was awakened in a peculiar manner. A bright light shone in his face, and he opened his eyes suddenly to see a tall man bending over him and holding a lantern above his head. There was a devilish sneering expression upon the man's face, and it caused Arthur a great thrill of horror and recognition.

"Jerry Dunham," he gasped, and in an instant was upon his feet.

It was no other than Dunham. The three villains had separated to search the cavern, and by chance Dunham had discovered the sleeping boy. Instantly a triumphant cry broke from his lips.

"Now I've got ye at last, ye young cub. Stand where ye are or I'll blow yer brains out."

A pistol was in his hand. It was a desperate moment for Arthur.

"Give up, ye young cub," again cried Dunham savagely. "It's yer only way. Get down on yer knees and beg!"

"Never!" cried Arthur stoutly. Then with all his strength and agility he dashed upon Dunham.

Crack! The pistol exploded in the villain's hand. Chance, however, sent the bullet astray and spared Arthur's life. A terrific blow on the wrist sent the weapon flying from Dunham's hand. It was a close struggle now, and Arthur put all his strength forward. But he was a child in the grasp of the ruffian. A hoarse laugh broke from Dunham's lips, and he twisted Arthur backward, over upon the ground, and his fingers closed about his throat. Tightly he drew them, until stars flashed before the boy's eyes, life and light and reason began to leave him, and he felt in that swift instant that he was dying. It was the firm purpose of Jerry Dunham to take his young life then and there. One minute more and the soul of Arthur Harris would have taken its final flight. The deadly grip about his windpipe was crushing out life and reason. But that minute of time was sufficient to turn the scale. In the opening of the struggle the lantern had been thrown to the ground, and now lay here, the rays being turned full upon Dunham and his intended victim. To a person approaching the spot from the darkness a vivid and comprehensive picture was presented. As chance had it a person was approaching the spot. A powerful broad-shouldered man it was, and a great cry came from his lips:

"Hands up, you durned reptile, or yer a dead dog. What are you doin' thar?"

The newcomer hurled himself upon Dunham, whose hold upon Arthur was broken. Then a curse broke from the villain's lips, he grappled with the stranger, and a struggle ensued which baffles description. How it might have ended it is difficult to say, but the struggle was brought to a sudden and unceremonious end by Dunham tearing himself loose and taking to his heels down the dark arches of the cavern. He was not pursued by his antagonist, who stood gazing after him with amazement and contempt.

"Just what I might aknow'n ther dirty reptile would do!" he exclaimed, shaking the dust from his buckskin suit. "I ought not ter hev guv him ther chance."

By this time Arthur had partly recovered himself. His head yet swam with the effects of his terrible experience, but he managed to get upon his feet and face his rescuer. Then a loud cry of amazement broke from the lips of each.

"Comanche Bill, and alive!"

"Dang my moccasins if it ain't one of my boys an' down hyar! What on airth does this mean?"

Comanche Bill, in the flesh and as well as when last seen by Arthur, now stood before him. The brave boy could hardly believe his senses.

"Am I dreaming?" he muttered.

"In course ye ain't," replied Comanche. "But how on airth did ye git here? Didn't tumble down into ther center of ther airth same as I did, did yer?"

"You—you fell through a deep hole in the ground," said Arthur, gazing at Bill yet as though he could not believe his senses. "But we gave you up for dead."

"Dead!" ejaculated Bill. "Not much. I'm the livest man you ever seen. Oh, yes, I took a mighty big tumble—went down through a hole—but I fell into ther river—this same stream—an' though it durned nigh busted my wind, I kept up an' swum ashore. That's the hull of it."

Then Arthur detailed the whole story of the disaster in the canyon and his experiences with Dunham and his gang. Comanche Bill listened intently.

Suddenly the stillness of the cavern was broken with the sharp report of a revolver. A bullet whistled close to Comanche Bill's head. Another bullet cut some fringe from the shoulder of his buckskin shirt. In an instant the lantern went out, and the scout was prone upon the ground.

Comanche had noted the direction of the last pistol flash and now fired a shot in that direction. A distant howl of pain attested that it had not been without effect. The scout now took the aggressive most actively, and whispering to Arthur to keep by his side, crept cautiously forward in the darkness. Shots were now rapidly exchanged in the darkness. It was evident that the three villains had joined forces, and were disposed to keep up the fight indefinitely. It was hazardous work for all parties in the darkness, but the desperation of the villains led them on to take the chances. After an ineffectual fusillade of an hour or so, silence reigned, and after some listening Comanche became satisfied that the villains had made a change of base. Suddenly three men hurled themselves upon the two, and a terrific struggle ensued. Old Comanche was not to be taken this way, however, and he fought like a

demon, hurling the villains about like so many puppets, and in a moment they were in full retreat.

All was darkness again, and if our friends had not gained anything in the strife they certainly had not lost. In vain Comanche Bill searched for them. Not a trace could be found. Hours passed into a whole day before the scout was constrained to give up the pursuit. Two prime questions now were presented to Arthur and Comanche Bill. These were the question of subsistence first, and secondly the possibility of ever finding an exit to the cavern. The latter question seemed to have assumed desperate proportions, for they only seemed to become hourly more deeply entangled in the network of dark passages. They made their way to the river, Arthur having lines in his pocket, and artificial flies, and soon they had as many fine salmon trout as he desired. Sufficient driftwood was found upon the river banks to start a fire, and the fish were roasted and eaten with avidity by the hungry twain. All this while they were not disturbed by the villains who were their avowed enemies.

They then took turns in sleeping, and thus ten hours were passed. Then, much refreshed, both arose and started upon the journey down the river. They kept on for a long while. Of course, they had no means of measuring time, save by guesswork. But at regular intervals they halted for food and sleep. It seemed to them that three days must have been consumed in this tedious effort to find the mouth of the subterranean river, when a sudden catastrophe befell them. Arthur was walking but a few steps in advance of Comanche Bill, when a quick, sharp cry escaped his lips, the ground gave way beneath his feet, and he vanished from sight into a narrow opening in the cavern floor. Horrified, Comanche Bill shouted down this, but received no answer.

CHAPTER X.—In the Mestos Prison.

Jack Holcombe was more surprised at the momentous declaration of his countryman, that their lives were in the balance, indeed that King Mozomo was likely to decree their death; he was dumfounded.

"You may call me John Smith for the present. If I can save you I will, and then I will tell you all," said the interpreter.

Jack could say no more. Meanwhile John Smith kept up an unintelligible jabbering with the king. Suddenly he turned to Jack.

"He wants to know how you got here," he said briefly.

Jack related the whole story. John Smith interpreted it to King Mozomo, who seemed to grow excited and partly arose from his throne gesticulating and jabbering wildly. John Smith answered in tones of thunder. Not a word was intelligible to Jack or Inez, but that they were couched in eloquence it was plain to see. They were not without powerful effect upon the king. The monarch had at first half arisen from his seat, and trembled with what seemed to be passion. Then, as John Smith went on with his eloquence, step by step he came down the dais until

he stood face to face with the orator. Then his eyes seemed to blaze. He turned, and with a gesture the people fell back. Then the king's hand was extended to John Smith, who bowed over it. In an undertone he managed to say to Jack:

"I have saved your lives. Advance and salute the king."

Realizing that it was policy to render homage to a king in a strange country, Jack advanced with Inez, and they bowed before the monarch, who seemed to be much pleased. He smiled, and turning, strode away, waving the people away before him. John Smith turned now to Jack and exclaimed:

"You are under the protection of the king, and consequently are safe for the time being. It was a close question, though, and even now you are sworn to remain forever in Mesto, which is the name of this underground country, and to become loyal subjects of King Mozomo. The verdict of death was upon you, and it was only on this condition that your lives were spared."

Jack laughed recklessly.

"That is all right, Mr. Smith," he said good-humoredly, "but I would be willing to wager you even that I do not remain as long in this place as you have."

John Smith did not seem pleased.

"Allow me to caution you," he said impressively. "You are in a most dangerous position. You have but little idea of the power and resources of these people. I warn you to be careful. I have made a great sacrifice to save you. Any treasonable act upon your part would cost me my life now. I have, in other words, pledged my life to save yours."

This was an argument which the brave boy prospector could not disregard. He gripped John Smith's hand and said:

"If there is a possibility of escape from this place, I shall embrace it, and you shall go with me. I thank you for what you have done, and promise you that I will compromise you in no way."

John Smith seemed greatly relieved.

"You see, these people are very suspicious and very keen," he declared. "We shall be constantly under surveillance. Ah!"

The exclamation was caused by a sound in the speaker's rear. Smith turned quickly, just as a crouching figure sprang up and glided away, flashing a baleful glance. It was one of the Mestos who had been listening to the conversation. John Smith perceptibly shuddered. Of course the words were not intelligible to the fellow, but he could infer much from Jack's manner, and Smith felt some apprehension.

"Quite likely that scoundrel will go to the king with some sort of a yarn," he declared. "I wish I had him by the throat, the sneaking cur."

They moved away from the spot and down one of the streets of the city. As they went on John Smith explained to them very many curious things about the Mestos. Jack asked him about the perpetual light which pervaded the underground country.

"That is a marvelous freak," replied Smith, "although very simply explained. You have scratched a lucifer match, and seen the luminous

glow left upon the wall? This light is similar to that, and is nothing more nor less than a chemical precipitation of a kind of phosphorus, emanated from the fumes of several large sulphur-boiling springs in the interior."

Before Jack or Inez could express their surprise with this revelation, hurrying footsteps were heard behind them, and the next moment they were faced by a number of Mesto warriors, who addressed Smith:

"We are ordered by the king to throw you into prison," they declared in the Mestos tongue.

John Smith gave an exclamation of horror as the Mestos warriors surrounded them, and beseeched Jack, who raised his rifle, to offer no resistance. One of the warriors knocked Jack's rifle from his hands by the blow of his stone axe. The next moment all were seized and securely bound with stout thongs. So our adventurers were led back to the city, the center of a throng of excited people. Once more they were in the public square, but this time the king did not sit upon his throne. They were met by a dignitary whom John Smith addressed as a chief justice of the nation. This man curtly made reply that the charge against the prisoners was that of treason, and they were to be held subject to the king's command. Orders were given to the guards who now led the prisoners down devious streets to the door of a grim-looking stone building. Into one large room they were all committed, and a guard placed at the door. Jack and Inez, while they were both somewhat dismayed at the turn of affairs, did not suffer the depression experienced by John Smith.

"Do not despair," said Jack. "We may yet be able to win the king's clemency. I cannot think that he will take so serious a step as our execution, when we are guilty of no offense."

Hours passed in their dreary confinement in the dark chamber. The guard still paced up and down before the door. What was to be their fate they knew not. John Smith feared the worst. The hours wore away slowly until the time came when the Mesto people sought sleep. Though it was as light as at any other time, it being perpetual day in the underground country, the people were obliged to sleep just the same as those who lived in the world of daylight and darkness. Inez, reclining upon a couch of skins in one corner of the chamber, slept lightly, and even John Smith was dozing. But Jack Holcombe was wide awake. A daring resolve was uppermost in his breast, and this embodied the hope of escape. He waited a reasonable time until he fancied that the entire city was in slumber. The Mesto house did not boast of closed doors, such an invention as hinges, no doubt, being unknown. There was simply a square opening for entrance or exit, that was all. The presence of the single guard at the door had been deemed sufficient to keep the prisoners in their quarters. Jack smiled as he noted this fact. He crept to the door and watched the gigantic sentinel as he paced to and fro swinging his huge stone axe. He was a formidable foe to attack, yet Jack was a strong, athletic boy, and moreover, was possessed of a strategic plan which he believed would work. Escape was his whole purpose now. In an inner pocket Jack had a piece of strong cord. With the use of a couple of sticks he made what was

certainly a very effective garrote. Imbued with deadly determination he waited for the foe to turn his back, and then crept upon him softly and silently. It was a mighty risk.

CHAPTER XI.—A Break for Liberty.

But if there was one person in the world just suited to take a risk such as this most desperate one, Jack Holcombe was certainly that one. Cool, daring and resolute, he could only miss through circumstances beyond control or unforeseen. Nobody save the guard was in sight or hearing outside the prison. Jack did not stop to think of the possibility of the existence of other barriers to escape. His one motive was to overcome the guard. This must be done silently, swiftly. A word, an outcry would be sufficient to defeat him, and defeat meant death. Jack was fully conscious, however, of all this. He crept like a shadow out of the door. The guard had reached the end of his beat and was about to turn. With an inward prayer for success Jack took the great leap. He was upon the Mesto warrior in a bound. His fingers were twined about the man's neck, and at once shut off his speech and wind. There was a powerful struggle, the garrote in Jack's hand tightened, and his enemy sank back unconscious. The game was won.

With wildly beating heart Jack drew a handkerchief from his pocket and stuffed it in the prostrate barbarian's mouth. Then with the cord he deftly bound him hand and foot. All this had been done in a very brief space of time. Neither Inez nor John Smith were cognizant of it. Jack did not propose to lose time, however, and dashed into the prison and seized Smith by the shoulders.

"Wake up!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "Now is our chance. Liberty is ours."

Already Inez was upon her feet, startled by Jack's cry. Smith staggered to his feet, his eyes yet obscured with sleep. It was a half minute before he recovered. Then, when he became aware of Jack's daring move, he was dismayed.

"You have sealed our fate," he declared. "They will not spare our lives now. We are lost."

This took away Jack's patience.

"Confound it, don't be a fool, Smith!" he cried angrily. "All depends upon quick work. We might as well die in the attempt at escape as to remain here and tamely await certain death. Be a man."

The words seemed to make a great change in John Smith. He immediately sprang up and cried resolutely:

"Yes, I can be a man. The die is cast, and I will stand by it. Come on!"

Jack led Inez out of the prison. They were now in a broad paved court. Just beyond were the streets of the city. There was no difficulty in making their way along, as all was as plain as daylight in the upper world. It was certain that the fickle goddess of fortune favored them, for they did not meet anybody until they reached the city wall. Then just in time John Smith caught Jack and Inez's arms and drew them both back into the shadow of a building. One of the Mes-

to guards passed the next moment, and fortunately without seeing them. After he had passed the prisoners slipped quickly and quietly out, and left the city behind them at as rapid a gait as possible. For over a mile they kept up this gait, until they were deep in a jungle or thick growth of young trees similar to cane. Here a momentary halt was called, and the question passed around:

"What shall we do now?"

It was a problem of no mean sort. Of course the great object was to as soon as possible get out of the underground country. All depended upon this. The extent of the Mesto country was not over five hundred square miles, and a hiding-place could not long be maintained. But to find an exit or means of reaching the upper world was the difficulty. Jack and Inez knew that they had come into the region by means of the river, but to return that way needed a strong boat and a knowledge of the river channels, all of which they had not. The Mestos frequently made their way up the river to the outer world, and they were no doubt identical with the fancied ghosts seen and described by Comanche Bill.

But for our adventurers to attempt it was out of the question. Even should they succeed in getting a boat it was not likely that they could find their way up the difficult river course. That other methods of leaving the Mesto country existed John Smith declared a certain fact. But with not one was he at all familiar. He remembered, however, that one day in debate King Mozomo had mentioned a certain western gateway beyond a range of small hillocks and where the perpetual light came to an end. Beyond this point the phosphoric precipitate had no effect, and there was no doubt but that an avenue from thence led to the upper earth. Smith could only guess the direction of this part of the domain. It was their only alternative, and they were obliged to accept it. They at once set out upon the quest. But they had not gone far when a terrific uproar was heard in the distance. Their escape had been discovered, and their lives now depended upon quitting the Mesto country most expeditiously. Smith trembled like one with an ague, for his faith that they would escape was slight indeed.

Jack, however, was far from carrying a faint heart. He assisted Inez along at a rapid gait, and in this manner they covered quite a space of ground. The Mestos had not as yet struck their trail. The failure of the barbarians to do so immediately gave our friends a good chance to get a good lead. Soon the face of the country began to undergo a change. The stone houses of the Mestos became less frequent, and the waving fields of white grain changed for barren plains covered with stunted shrubs and scrubby species of pines. All signs attested that they were entering a wilderness, and as Jack himself well knew, it must abound with wild beasts. But our adventurers kept on and were gratified after a time to hear the sounds of their pursuers die out in the rear, a sure sign that they were off the track.

"Hurrah!" cried Jack heartily. "We will win yet. We have distanced the enemy, and it is now only a question of time when we will find the way out of this place. If I ever reach the upper world

alive, I will bring down a company of United States soldiers and subdue these obstreperous Mestos. They need to be taught a lesson of civility."

At this juncture they came to a refreshing spring of pure water. A brief rest was indulged in and then they again journeyed on for hours. For what seemed like three days they kept on in this way, passing through dense forests of peculiar trees, across wide plains and forded small rivers, until there were indications that they were approaching the border of the underground country, where the phosphoric light ceased and darkness ensued. All this while they had seen nothing of the Mestos and could well congratulate themselves that they had actually distanced them. Jack's hopes were very high. The light from the illuminated roof of the mighty cavern had begun to grow dim, until it became almost like twilight. Vegetation seemed to cease also, and they now came to hard, flinty ground.

But their escape was by no means as yet assured. At the most unexpected moment, when they were in fancied security, the air was suddenly rent with wild, savage cries in their rear, and turning their heads all saw with horror that the Mestos in a large body were almost upon them. Both Jack and John Smith turned pale, but assisting Inez between them, they hurried on swiftly. They were at the moment not far from the confines of the dark cavern, and to reach it might mean the eluding of their foes; failure was certain death. On they pressed, but the Mestos gained. The horror of capture was uppermost in their minds, and they were straining every nerve when Jack suddenly came to a halt and cried out with startling force at a scene spread before them.

"My God! What awful thing is that?"

Comanche Bill was transfixed with horror when after shouting down the deep pit into which Arthur had fallen he received no answer. Dropping a stone and hearing it quickly strike the bottom he realized the pit was not so very deep. Unwinding his lariat and fastening one end to a large boulder, he let himself down into the hole and struck bottom before he came to the end of the rope. The first thing he came across was the inanimate body of Arthur. He brought forth a flask of brandy from one of his pockets and poured some of it down the boy's throat. Arthur quickly came to and Comanche Bill told him what had happened to him. Both saw a passage leading from the pit. As soon as Arthur was able to go ahead they entered the passage. After going quite a distance they saw a strange light ahead. As they drew nearer the light appeared like that of sunset and not the bright light of day. As they went on the roof became higher, and soon they came out upon the verge of a wide plain. In the distance could be seen shrubs and trees and the waters of a river. Both stood spellbound at the wonderful scene. Then Arthur exclaimed:

"My God, Bill, we have reached the mythical region, the centre of the earth!"

"This beats all I ever saw!" exclaimed Comanche Bill.

After they had recovered from their amazement, they began a tour of exploration. They

came to a small valley through which ran a river. How much farther they would have gone is not certain for suddenly Arthur clutched Bill's arm and cried:

"What does that mean?"

Then both saw an alarming sight. Down the side of an eminence two hundred yards away a large body of savage-looking men were advancing toward them with shouts and maddened yells.

CHAPTER XII.—In the Power of the Enemy.

The real cause of Jack Holcombe's terrified cry was the sight of what he fancied was a party of the Mestos directly in front of them. He saw a couple of men in the distance, and his fear and despair found vent in that great cry:

"My God! What awful thing is that?"

It seemed for an instant more than he could bear to know that the foe had cut them off and literally surrounded them. But he was quickly undeceived, and his fears proved groundless. The two men whom he saw before him at some distance were not even Mestos or even enemies, but no others than Arthur Harris and Comanche Bill. Upon the other hand neither Arthur nor the old scout had as yet caught sight of their friends, their whole attention being claimed by the Mestos. When they did finally see them, and fully comprehended the situation, the effect upon them was thrilling. Without once thinking of the danger and regardless of the charging Mestos, Arthur dashed down the slope to meet his chum. It was then that Jack recognized both him and Comanche, and a great cry escaped his lips. He rushed forward, and it was not many moments before the two chums were clasped in each other's arms. A few words hastily explained matters to Arthur, who welcomed Inez with delight, and then, once more, they dashed forward. The time consumed was brief, and yet it was sufficient to give the Mestos quite an advantage. But Comanche Bill had not been idle.

With his rifle and unerring aim he had picked off several of the barbarians. By this time the others had reached his side, and Arthur was enabled to join him with his rifle. A quick and deadly fire was opened upon the Mestos. The underground savages were a daring and reckless people. Yet the terrible execution effected by the rifles made sufficient impression upon them to warrant a halt. Seeing that the foe were held at bay, Comanche Bill exclaimed hastily:

"Here, Jack Holcombe, you take Arthur's place, and you, Arthur, take ther gal back and get her inter ther upper cave some way. Ther lariat are yet thar, an' you an' this man can go up fust and draw her up on ther rope arter yer. Then cum back, both on ye."

The command was quickly obeyed. Jack took Arthur's place, and the latter, motioning to Inez and John Smith, started for the upper cave. It did not require a great length of time to reach the bottom of the pit, where, as Bill had said, the lariat was found all safe. Arthur went lightly up first, and John Smith followed him. Arrived at the top Inez, by Arthur's directions, fastened the lariat beneath her shoulders and was quickly drawn up into the upper cavern.

"Await our return," exclaimed Arthur as he prepared to descend the rope. "I think you will have nothing to fear, Inez. We will return as speedily as possible. Have good courage."

"Of course I will," laughed the brave girl. "I hope you do not think I am a coward."

"By no means," replied Arthur gallantly. "On the contrary, you are the bravest, most sensible young lady I ever met."

Before Inez could recover from her blushes at this compliment, Arthur had slid down the rope with John Smith, and they were gone, and she was alone. The light in the upper cavern was very dim, and Inez was scarcely able to distinguish objects a dozen feet away. In spite of her boasted courage, she did feel a trifle timid as she strove in vain to pierce the gloom of the place with her vision, and a series of incomprehensible noises from the cavern arches would come to her hearing, causing her to start and shiver. She waited what seemed to her an interminable length of time for her male companions, and was growing weary of her task, when she received a great start of terror. From the dark cavern arches there suddenly crept swiftly out a dark indistinguishable form. That it was a living being was certain, but whether a man or beast Inez could not in her terror tell. The next instant the gigantic form of a man swooped down upon her, and an evilly exultant voice cried fiendishly:

"Ah, mine at last. Now I have you wholly in my power, Inez Melvin, and this time you shall not escape me."

A shrill, agonizing cry of terror escaped the young girl's lips:

"Jerry Dunham! Oh, Heaven, I am lost! Help! help!"

Wild and terrified her voice rang out through the cavern arches. But it was in vain. The sound could not penetrate to the hearing of her friends below, nor could they have come to her assistance in time. The truth was that the three villains—Dunham, Bowman and Hurd, had in vain tried to retrace their steps to the cavern entrance after their unsuccessful encounter with Arthur and Comanche Bill. Failing in this, they had wandered about in vain striving to find the entrance, and by chance had arrived at the mouth of the pit, just as Arthur and John Smith had drawn Inez up from below. The exultation of Dunham at the prospect of getting the fair prey into his hands again cannot be expressed in words. A plan was quickly laid for her capture, and which the villain was now endeavoring to carry out, with the likelihood of success. Of course, Inez was a child in the villain's grip, and he held her as in a vise.

He crushed her delicate wrists in his strong hands until the brutal act wrung low moans of pain from her white lips. All the savage brute element of his nature was aroused.

"Come on!" he growled madly. "Yer mine now, I swear it. Oh, yer won't come, eh? We'll see about that."

Dragging her with most brutal force across the cavern, the villain forced Inez to accompany him. Bill Bowman lent assistance, while Hurd followed in the rear. In this manner they proceeded down one of the cavern passages, and had soon left the pit far behind. Inez was half paralyzed

with horror and despair. Panting with her efforts to resist her captors, she was nigh fainting many times. In this manner they kept on for hours. The young girl's only hope was that the villains would be overtaken by her friends and her rescue effected. But as time passed and the distance increased, her heart began to fail her. The villains blackened the air of the cavern with their vile profanity. Their quest was for the outlet of the place.

"The fiends are against us!" gritted Bill Bowman. "I wish I hadn't come inter this cussed place. We might have let ther boy alone, anyway. It's all yer fault, Jerry Dunham."

"What's that?"

Jerry Dunham came to a halt. His habitually ugly temper was fully aroused. Futile efforts to find the cavern exit had contributed to his irritation, and these words of his pal were just sufficient to cause the pot to boil over, to speak figuratively. All three villains were beat out and half famished, and there seemed no better prospect than ever of escaping from the cavern. It was true that Jerry Dunham was responsible for the catastrophe, therefore Bowman stood his ground.

"I say that we wouldn't hev been here if it hadn't been fer you," he reiterated.

Dunham trembled with wrath.

"Yer a dog-goned liar! Take that!"

"Enough said," cried Bowman, leaping to his feet and whipping out his bowie. "My Kentucky blood won't stand being called a liar. It's one or ther other of us, Jerry Dunham."

Quicker than a flash Dunham had drawn his revolver and fired point-blank at Hurd. With an awful cry the Western ruffian threw up his arms and fell dead—shot through the heart. For a moment silence reigned. Then not a word was spoken, though a strange hissing noise came through Bill Bowman's lips as the two border ruffians crossed bowie blades in a struggle to the death.

As Arthur and Smith were hastening toward the place where they had left Comanche Bill and Jack Arthur was conscious that Smith was acting in a strange way and continually eyeing him. Suddenly Smith asked Arthur what his last name was, and on Arthur telling him it was Harris the man became very much interested and asked further questions, at the end of which he exclaimed:

"Arthur, I am your father, who left New York years ago to come to this gold country, and was captured by these underground people and have been here ever since."

Arthur was dumfounded, but delighted that his father was alive. At this time they came upon Jack and Comanche Bill fighting the Mestos. A hasty explanation was made and then at a favorable moment all made a break for the shaft which led to the upper cavern. It did not take long to reach it and climb the rope ladder and draw it up after them. Then the Mestos gave up the pursuit, and they were safe. Then they saw that Inez was missing. A hasty search was made, which resulted in a trail being found and which they followed. In a short while they came upon a fearful scene, that of the end of the fight between the three villains.

Inez now saw her friends and came rushing up to them pointing to the forms of three men on the ground. Hurd was dead, Bowman was gasping his last breath and Dunham was just about alive enough to tell Jack as he bent over him that he was the murderer of his father and then passed away. Our adventurers now left the place behind them and started in search of the cavern entrance. It was many weary hours before Comanche Bill gave the cry of "Light ahead!" and soon they came to the place where Arthur Harris had first forced his way into the place. Then it was all hands once more gazed upon God's upper world.

CHAPTER XIII.—Conclusion.

Comanche Bill had little trouble after his explanation to the miners that the firm of Dunham, Bowman and Hurd was obsolete, and that the deed of the mine belonged to Jack Holcombe, in bringing them one and all to terms. As soon as assured of their proper division of the mine's profits they readily joined the new standard, and cheered lustily for the new firm. Comanche Bill proved an able general, and soon had the men all under his command. Then work was begun in earnest. A partnership was made which admitted Arthur and his father, James Harris, to the Los Pinos Gold Mining Company. The scout would only accept the position of general superintendent, and he proved himself the right man for the right place. As for Arthur Harris, he did not send word to his mother of his good fortune in finding his father. It was his desire to give her a great surprise, so he merely wrote her encouraging letters of the success of the mine. And it was a success, too. Indeed, its fame spread so rapidly that one day there came up the river on one of the boats a party of four men, all magnates of Denver. They called for an interview with Jack Holcombe, and immediately stated their errand.

"What is the lowest cash price for Los Pinos?" was the question asked Jack.

"If you mean what will I take in cash for Los Pinos I will say one million dollars, and nothing less," he replied.

Without an instant's hesitation the reply came: "We will accept your offer."

Jack was the happiest young man in the United States, for that very day Inez Melvin had promised to be his wife. Congratulations upon Jack's double good fortune were now in order. Arthur Harris and his father were the most enthusiastic. Preparations were immediately made for the return home. Arthur and his father made a snug fortune from their interest in the mine, which was disposed of, so that all could return together. In due course of time New York was reached in safety by the little party, after an absence by the boys of hardly one year. It is useless to attempt to depict the joyful meeting between James Harris and his wife. The Harris household was a joyful one that day.

Next week's issue will contain "FROM BOOT-BLACK TO SENATOR; or, BOUND TO MAKE HIS WAY."

CURRENT NEWS

PLACING A STATUE WITH ICE CAKES

Cakes of ice were used in the placing of two heavy sculptured stone lions at the entrance of the Summit County Court House in Akron, O., recently, according to *Popular Mechanics*. When the statues had been hauled to the scene it was found that no derrick having sufficient lifting capacity to hoist them from the wagons and into position was availing. Consequently, the excavations in which the stone lions were to rest were filled with ordinary cakes of ice to a level with the wagons. Sliding the figures from the wagons onto the ice was an easy matter, and by melting the ice with hot water they were soon lowered to their foundations.

RADIO IN EACH ROOM OF APARTMENT HOUSE

Probably the most startling indication of the great interest being manifested in radio was given in St. Louis when a large advertisement appeared in the local papers of a 54-apartment building just being completed in which every apartment is supplied with complete radio equipment.

In the same issue of the newspapers there were

two full columns of advertisements of different radio sets both new and old and parts for sale and exchange, a small number of advertisements of radio repair shops and a few requests for second-hand radio sets.

The volume of radio want advertisements equaled about one-third of the volume of automobile want ads in these papers.

JUMPED FROM WASHINGTON MONUMENT

Albert Birney Seip, 25, of Washington, D. C., jumped to death the other day from the south window of the Washington Monument to the ground, 504 feet. He had been in a hospital recently and ill health is thought to have been the cause of his suicide.

Available records show that Seip is the first person to make the death plunge from the window of the monument, although a woman—Mrs. Mae Varney Cockrell of Covington, Ky.—jumped down the elevator shaft to her death from the third floor landing from the top, a distance of about 500 feet, on February 24, 1915.

Seip did not ascend the monument in the elevator, but walked up.

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THE TROUBLES OF A BOY MILLIONAIRE

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

He did not dare go far back from the road, for as he knew there was a precipice just beyond with a drop of some forty or fifty feet. It was necessary to pass the gate, for in the other direction the road led directly down the mountain into Cross Creek, so Jack stole along inside the tree line with all caution, but it was impossible to avoid making some noise, for dry twigs would snap and once he stumbled over a stone.

When he came opposite the gate there was the armed detective still pacing up and down. The poor boy scarcely dared to breathe, and his steps were slow and measured.

Suddenly a most dismal cry rang out. It was only an owl, and it startled him terribly. Involuntarily he gave a jump backward and a dead branch beneath his left foot broke with a loud snap.

"Halt! Come out of there or I fire! I see you!" the guard shouted.

Jack's first impulse was to run. Wisely he thought better of it and, dodging behind a big chestnut tree, stood still.

Crack! Crack!

Two shots rang out.

Jack heard nothing of the bullets. Frightened enough, the boy stood still and waited. It seemed as if the thumping of his heart might have been heard across the road.

A moment later a man with a rifle came running from the direction of the house.

"What's the row?" he called.

"Dunno. Thought I heard suthing over 'cross the road," was the guard's reply.

"What like?"

"An owl hooted, then I thought I heard a stick break. There's some one over there, sure."

"Go on over and use your flashlight."

"And get plugged by a Hill Billie? None in mine, thanks."

"You're a blame coward."

"After you, brother. Why in thunder don't you go yourself?"

"Tain't my job."

"I'm with you. Let's both go."

"Come on, then."

Jack gave up hope as two flashlights were turned in among the trees.

There was nothing to be done but to wait and take chances.

This worked all right as luck would have it, for both men were afraid, and the search was not a

thorough one. The lights were not turned behind the big chestnut and Jack escaped.

The guard returned to the gate "allowing" that it must have been some prowling wildcat disturbed by the owl.

As they stood talking Jack sneaked on and soon had the satisfaction of finding himself out of sight of the gate and well on his way up the mountain.

But the boy knew that his danger was by no means over.

Just where he would strike the detectives' outpost he could not tell, but he was bound to hit it somewhere, and there lay the difficulty. Every step seemed to add to his terror at first, but at length he grew calmer and began to hope that he had slipped past unobserved.

And now came the thought of what he should do after he reached Bloomsburg.

Jack resolved to inquire for Father John if he was stopped and trouble came.

"He will remember his talk with Val," he said to himself. "I will tell him the exact situation. I am sure he will prevail upon the mountaineers to help me get away out of this region when he hears what I have to say."

He toiled on up the steep incline and it seemed to him that he must have almost gained the divide when suddenly his hopes were dashed.

Two armed men darted out into the road.

"Halt!" cried one, aiming his rifle at Jack, and a flashlight was turned upon him. As far as Jack could make out they were not the men he had encountered on this road before, but they knew him instantly, and one exclaimed:

"Gee whiz! It's young Vane!"

"I'll stick to that," thought Jack. "It may be a help; to tell them who I really am is no good."

"You have your pass, I suppose, Mr. Vane?" asked the man with an attempt to be civil.

"No; I have no pass," replied Jack.

"Where are you meaning to go?"

"Nowhere in particular. I am just taking a walk."

"At this time of night?"

"Well! Hasn't Val Vane who owns this whole country a right to take a walk on his own property at any time, day or night?"

"Decidedly not as things are now. You will have to turn back."

"That don't go," broke in the other. "The last order was to hold 'em for examination, you know."

"Right. I forgot. Come with us, Mr. Vane."

"This is an outrage!" flashed Jack.

"It is kind of tough, I'll admit," grinned the detective. "You ought to have provided yourself with a pass."

"I had one, but I lost it."

"Unfortunate, and Mr. Dubey away, too, as I understand it. You'll have to go with us, however."

Yet yet no hand had been laid on Jack, but now as he did not move the speaker started to take him by the arm.

The boy pulled back.

"Don't touch me!" he cried. "Lead on and I'll follow if I must. I think you will both regret this."

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

INSURANCE ON REGISTERED MAIL
INCREASED TO \$100

The insurance limitation payable for lost registered mail will be increased from \$50 to \$100 beginning April 1, it was announced by Postmaster General New recently.

The fee for the \$100 indemnity will be 20 cents, but indemnity of \$50 will still be obtainable at the old rate of 10 cents.

BIG TREES

People generally associate ideas of the California big trees with the Mariposa grove, near the Yosemite, and yet it appears that there are in the Sequoia National Park 1,166,000 trees, 12,100 of which exceed 10 feet in diameter. Some idea of the immensity of one of these big trees can be gathered from the statement that "3,000 fence posts, sufficient to support a wire fence around 8,000 or 9,000 acres, have been made from one of these giants, and that was only the first step toward using its huge carcass. Six hundred and fifty thousand shingles, enough to cover the roofs of seventy or eighty houses, formed the second item of its product. Finally, there still remained hundreds of cords of firewood which no one could use because of the prohibitive expense of hauling the wood out of the mountains.

"RESURRECTION PLANT"

During the autumn and early winter years ago men might have been seen in the streets selling an odd little plant which they called the "resurrection plant." Many and wonderful were the tales told of the plant by these itinerant salesmen to persuade their prospective customers to buy. Most of them either stated directly or else led their hearers to infer that the plants came only from the Holy Land, where they were emblematical of the Resurrection. Most of them, however, were *Polypodium incarum*, the commonest of all the ferns in Florida.

During the dry season the plant curls up into a small ball and has the appearance of being dead. In this condition it will bear transportation well. When placed in a bowl containing a little water its leaves will unfold and assume a bright green color, making a pretty and ornamental plant.

AMERICAN COIN SET SOLD FOR \$100,000

Wayte Raymond, dealer in coins, of 489 Park avenue, New York, has bought from M. Knoedler & Co. the collection of early American and United States coins recently sold to the Knoedler Syndicate by James W. Ellsworth. Mr. Raymond paid about \$100,000 for the coins, said to be the largest amount ever given for a numismatic collection in this country.

The collection has been known for years as the finest in the United States, and Mr. Ellsworth, who has disposed of all his art works and other rare collections, with the exception of his Innes paintings and a Rembrandt, counted it as one of the most interesting and valuable of his possessions.

Among the valuable coins is the unique set of Nova Constellation patterns for a decimal system struck in 1783, in denominations of 100, 500 and 1,000 mills. This set was from the celebrated Parmalee collection sold in New York in 1890.

There is also the doubloon struck in New York in 1787 by Ephraim Brasher, of which there are only four specimens. There are only four pieces of the Colonial period and early trial pieces used before the regular adopted coinage at the United States mint in 1793, and a remarkable series of the gold, silver and copper coins of the United States from the beginning of the coinage in 1793 up to the present time, including two 1804 dollars and the finest known specimens of many other rare dates.

An interesting part of the collection is a series of the early private gold coins struck in California, Colorado, Utah, Oregon, North Carolina and Georgia. There are about 2,000 coins in the collection, making it the most important coin set ever sold here.

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THE SECRET OF THE CROSS OF GOLD

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG

A most mysterious murder had been committed in the house where I was stopping.

The owner was a friend of mine by the name of Levantine—Gerald Levantine was his full name.

The victim of the assassin was "Old Seybert Levantine," as he was familiarly called, who was an eccentric old bachelor, and the elder brother of Gerald.

The day preceding the murder, Harcourt Stanley, the adopted son of old Seybert Levantine, had returned home from New York, where he had been for two or three years attending a medical college.

Seybert Levantine had retired to his room in his brother Gerald's house, where he had made his home for ten years, just as usual.

In the morning a servant found him dead in his bed.

He had been stabbed to the heart.

Seybert Levantine was not worth a dollar that was not so invested that no one would profit by his death save his legal heirs.

The murdered man had been a soldier in the Union army, and he received a pension from the government that supported him.

He had a few hundred dollars saved up—not enough to tempt any one to kill him, though.

"Strange that so poor a man should have adopted a son," the reader says.

It was strange, but it came about this way:

One bad, stormy night, twenty-two years previous, as he was crossing the river in a small boat, Seybert Levantine came upon a drifting boat, in which was a little child—a boy three years old.

Seybert Levantine took the child home, and the little fellow won the affections of the entire household.

Gerald Levantine was only too glad to have Seybert adopt the boy, but he was very much surprised when his brother proposed to do so.

The reason why Gerald Levantine was astonished was simply because Seybert was a taciturn, morose man, who was never fond of children.

Seybert Levantine's adopted son was called Morton Levantine.

Old Seybert had never manifested any particular affection for the boy.

All these particulars I learned from Gerald.

Suspicion pointed to no one as the guilty party; and for nearly two weeks I had been working in vain to find a single clue to the perpetrator of the cruel deed.

As I stood upon the veranda watching the sunset this particular evening, Gerald Levantine came out of the house and approached me.

In his hand he had a small carved wooden case.

"I have just made a discovery," Gerald said.

I was interested at once.

"Does it relate to the murder?"

"Yes; I have discovered that a large cross of gold, which my brother for some reason treas-

ured with the greatest care, and which he always kept in this case, is gone!"

"Describe to me that cross," I said quickly.

He did so.

"If I ever see it I shall recognize it," I said.

"Do you think the missing cross could have been taken by the assassin?" Gerald asked.

"Possibly, but not probably. An article of so little value would not be an incentive to the commission of so terrible a crime," I replied.

Gerald Levantine's information regarding the cross of gold suggested an entirely new idea to me.

There might be some mystery about the cross of gold, if solved, which would lead to the solution of the mystery of the murder of Seybert Levantine.

Some weeks passed.

I had returned to New Orleans.

This was the first case that had baffled me for a number of years, and I knew that a rival detective agency had been working night and day to get ahead of me in the solution of the mystery.

One day I accompanied a company of sportsmen on a duck-shooting expedition into the depths of the great salt marshes, in the midst of which the Malay settlements, which have been in existence for years, though seldom visited by white men, are situated.

I became separated from my companions, and finally the alarming conviction that I was lost forced itself upon my mind.

How long I wandered about aimlessly I do not know, but it must have been for hours.

Night was coming on rapidly, when I heard the sound of footsteps.

A moment later I came to an opening in the bushes, and, to my surprise, I saw one of our company—a man who was a comparative stranger to me, and whose name was Pierce Rocher—advancing to the door of a hut in the center of the clearing.

Presently a strange looking old man, whom a glance assured me was a Malay, came out.

I was about to rush forth when something occurred that checked me.

From his pocket Rocher drew the cross of gold that Gerald Levantine had described to me.

I was sure it was the cross that was missing from the case of Seybert Levantine.

At the sight of the cross the old Malay uttered a startled cry, and made a spring at the golden trinket.

Rocher hurled him back.

"What do you mean?" he cried "Would you rob me?"

"No—no, but the cross—the cross! Where you get him?" the Malay asked.

"From my father!" answered Rocher.

"And your father's name?"

Rocher hesitated.

He was caught.

"You lie!" howled the Malay.

"No—no; I tell you the truth, but I do not know the name of my own father. Listen, old man; I was found drifting in a small boat on the river, when an infant, and the cross was about my neck."

"Why do you tell me this?" the Malay asked.

"Because I have found out the secret of the

cross. It opens, and within it is a bit of parchment, upon which a cipher message is written, but I made out the following: '100,000 pounds.' The cipher relates to a fortune, perhaps my own, and in the cross is also your picture, old man, the terrible scar across your forehead and all. Since I discovered the secret of the cross I have been on the lookout for the original of that picture—yourself. I saw you enter your hut a few moments ago, and recognized you. Now, I suspect you can read this cipher; that you are in some way concerned in the mystery of the cross, or your picture would not be in it. If you will read for me that cipher, and aid me to gain possession of the fortune I suppose it contains the secret of, I'll reward you as you never dreamed of; I'll make you rich," said Rocher.

"The cipher tells the secret of a fortune, and it belongs to him upon whose neck that cross was placed when he was an infant. I can read the cipher, but I will not, because you are not the owner of that cross."

"You shall read it, or, by heavens, you die!" cried Rocher.

As he spoke he clutched the aged Malay by the throat and whipped out a dagger.

Silently as a shadow I stole up behind Rocher and dealt him a blow on the head that knocked him senseless.

Then I snatched the cross from him.

"Come with me," I said, "and I will show you the rightful owner of the cross of gold."

The Malay fixed his dark eyes upon my face, and for a moment he regarded me with a searching glance. Then he said:

"I will trust you. Come!"

He led me through the swamp until we reached the waterside.

Then we halted, and I hurriedly told the Malay the history of the cross as far as I knew it. Then he gave me the following explanation:

"Twenty-five years ago I was the trusted servant of an English merchant in the Philippine Islands. His name was Hardress—Stephen Hardress. He was a widower, with a little son, an infant. Business called Mr. Hardress to America, and before setting out he deposited with a banker an immense sum of money. I witnessed the delivery of the money, and saw my master write out an order instructing the banker to deliver it to the bearer in case anything happened to him. Then he told the banker that I would be the party to present the order in case of accident to himself. The order was in cipher. The banker took a copy and the original was inclosed with my picture in the cross of gold and suspended about his little son's neck. I should add that the banker kept a copy of my picture.

"We set out for New Orleans, and arrived there in safety. I was left in the city while my master and his little son set out up the river to visit St. Louis.

"Mr. Hardress never came back, and I could never learn what his fate was, or that of his little son.

This was the Malay's story.

In the cross I found the order and the picture of the Malay.

With him I hastened to New Orleans, intending to take him to see Morton Levantine next day.

That night, in the hotel parlor, I had seated myself in a deep window, where the curtain concealed my form, when Rocher and a handsome young lady entered the room.

"It's all right, Mag," said Rocher. "Undoubtedly Morton Levantine is the heir to the mysterious fortune mentioned in the cipher in the cross of gold. I have lost the cipher and the cross, but I have found the Malay, the original of the picture, and he assures me that the owner of the cross was entitled to a fortune.

"Now, it is very lucky you met Morton Levantine in New York, and that he has fallen in love with you. Go right on. Play your part. Become his wife, and then he shall die. The cross I have reason to believe, is in the hands of one who will give it to him. When he has secured the fortune, we will insure his funeral, and you will inherit as his wife. Then we will leave the country and enjoy the money."

"Excellent!" replied the lady. "By the way," she went on, "I expect Morton Levantine here tonight. I received a message saying that he was coming to attend the reception given to the governor at this hotel this evening."

"That lead him on to offer you his hand in marriage. We must not fail now—I have risked too much. From the time when, in a moment of drunken confidence, old Seybert Levantine told me of the golden cross, and how he expected to realize a fortune through it and the boy Morton, I determined to possess that fortune myself. I killed Seybert Levantine, and if you fail me, girl, I will kill you."

"Never fear—I will not fail," was the young woman's answer.

Half an hour later, as he was leaving the hotel, I arrested Rocher and lodged him in prison.

I then returned to the hotel in full dress for the reception.

I was about to enter a small parlor on the second floor of the hotel, when I saw Morton Levantine and the young woman called Mag.

The young man's arm was about the false woman's waist, and her head rested upon his shoulder, when I entered the room.

I strode up to the pair.

"Morton Levantine, that woman is the accomplice of the assassin of your foster-father!" I said.

The woman sprang away and attempted to leave the room, but I placed her under arrest at once.

Then in a few words I gave the young man an explanation of the case.

The scoundrel Rocher was convicted of the murder of Seybert Levantine, in due time, and punished in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The fortune left by Morton's father with the banker in the Philippine Islands was eventually recovered, and he did not forget to reward me well for the part I had played in detecting the assassin of his foster-father, and the recovery of the cross of gold.

"My mind is made up," quoth the haughty co-ed, decidedly. "Just like the rest of you," replied the manager.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, APRIL 4, 1923

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

FUR BEARING ANIMALS ON ALASKAN ISLANDS

Plans for introducing fur bearing and game animals on islands in southeastern Alaska, where they have either never occurred or have been exterminated, are being worked out by the Biological Survey. It is proposed to stock certain islands with rabbits as food for fur bearers and man; to stock other islands with marten, mink and beaver. The introduction of elk on certain islands is also considered.

SEARCHLIGHT ON PEAK SENDS RAYS 80 MILES

On Mount Tamalpais, overlooking San Francisco Bay, is a new 60-inch searchlight of half a billion candle-power—500 times more powerful than the most powerful auto headlight. Its beams may be seen from a distance of 80 miles in any direction. It is intended to put this giant light to many practical uses, says the *Pathfinder*.

At a designated time it will project a beam straight up into the air, so that watches and clocks may be regulated, and it can also be made to serve as an aid to aerial navigation at night.

HOPES TO FLY TO POLE

Captain Amundsen, head of an Arctic exploration expedition that left Seattle last June in the schooner *Maud*, will hop off June 21 from Wainwright, Alaska, for a flight over the North Pole, according to a letter received from him by Capt John Backland, owner of the schooner *M. S. Holmes*.

The letter gave the present position of the *Maud* as 200 miles north by northeast from Wrangell Island and drifting slowly with the ice toward the pole.

GIRL BOOTBLACKS GOT FAT TIPS

Smiles of pretty girl shoeshiners drive business away, eventually, instead of stimulating it, according to E. F. Hodges, manager of the sanitary service shoppe in Cleveland, O. He has dismissed the girl shoeshiners and replaced them with men.

Here is how the "ruinous smiles" work out, according to Hodges:

"The men patrons couldn't resist the smiles of the girls and tipped them more than they could afford. The shine cost a dime but the tip often was a quarter or half a dollar.

"The impulse to tip a girl after she has shined your shoes is irresistible to the average man. So, my regular patrons began dropping off.

"Most of the girls made more than \$30 weekly. It was a good job for them, but bad for the house. We had more than 1,000 applications."

Men are back on the job now. Tips are not so lavish, but business is better, Hodges says.

LAUGHS

Stranger—Rastus, do the people who live across the road from you keep chickens? Rastus—Dey keeps some ob 'em, sah.

"Say, mamma, how much am I worth?" "You are worth a million to me, my son." "Say, mamma, couldn't you advance me twenty-five cents?"

Old Lady (in grocery store)—What do you sell codfish for, young man? Young Man (who is not altogether satisfied with the business)—'Cause I can't get nothin' else to do, ma'am.

Willard—Papa, may I go swimming? Papa—Why, Willard, only an hour ago you complained of a pain in your stomach. Willard—That's all right, papa. I can swim on my back.

"Does your wife take in washing, Sam?" "No, sah." "But I understand she did take in washing, Sam." "No, sah, you's wrong. I take in de washin', sah, and I takes de washin' out. All m' wife does is t' stay at home and do it, sah."

Deputation of Creditors—We've come to tell you that we are quite willing to make as easy an arrangement with you as possible. Debtor—the easiest arrangement you could make would be all to go away again.

Farmer—Here's a letter from city folks answering our ad, Mirandy. They want ter know if there's a bath in the house. What'll I tell 'em? His Wife—Tell 'em the truth. Tell 'em if they need a bath they'd better take it afore they come.

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed little Arthur, all out of breath, "I've just been playing with the Goodwin children and they have the measles at their house. Now, can I eat all the cake I want to? 'Cause you know, I'm going to be sick anyhow."

St. Peter (at the heavenly portals)—Come in, young lady; there's plenty of room. Chicago Girl—Excuse me, but I want to ask one question. St. Peter—I am here for the purpose of answering the questions of newcomers. Chicago Girl—Well, then, would you mind telling me if you keep any ice cream soda-water in this place?

INTERESTING NEWS ARTICLES

TELESCOPE HAS REFLECTOR THAT
WEIGHS 4½ TONS

The reflector of the huge telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory is a great disk of perfect glass, weighing no less than four and a half tons. This mirror is so sensitive that if a man comes within three feet of it the heat of his body causes it to be distorted.

BOY VAINLY DARES DEATH IN NIAGARA

Threading a narrow girder under the railroad tracks of the cantilever bridge, 150 feet above the Niagara Rapids, Leo Castle, 18 years old, of Alberta, walked from the Canadian to the American shore, where he was arrested.

Castle's performance was not intended as a stunt of the Blondin sort, but it provided many of the thrills that accompanied the act of the tightrope acrobat of another generation. Earlier in the day Castle had been barred from the American side because he lacked the \$8 with which to pay the head tax. Twice he was turned back by immigration officials, and then he decided to try the hazardous trip on the girders of the cantilever.

The path selected by the lad is about ten inches wide. The struts that branch out from the main framework offer no support or guide to a person standing upon it. Far below are the churning waters of swift drifts, where the waters of the river break to the Whirlpool Rapids. One false step would have sent Castle to death.

The boy walked nonchalantly—at times almost ran—while the few persons who watched gasped from fear that he would fall and there were deep-drawn breaths of relief as he completed the journey and stepped from the girder to the abutment on the American shore.

The trip and the risk were all in vain. Immigration officials had been among the spectators, and Castle was soon in custody, marching back to Canada on the upper steel arch bridge.

TO CURB RELIC HUNTERS

Michigan's riches of archeological and aboriginal deposits will be safeguarded for the State as Italy safeguards her art treasure if the bill introduced recently by State Senator Claspie becomes a law.

The bill provides that the State shall be entitled to all the historical and prehistorical, paleontological and geological deposits of scientific interest to be found in the State. The arrow heads, the copper vessels, the mounds once inhabited by entire tribes, the ruins of prehistoric mines—all these are to be conserved for the State.

The bill was introduced because of the recent interest displayed in Isle Royale, particularly by representatives of other State universities. Already these men have located on Isle Royale deposits that will be carried away to grace the halls of other universities unless this vandalism is stopped. Then there have been mere relic hunters who have opened up mounds and rifled them

of their contents in all parts of Michigan. These will be stopped if the bill passes. "I thoroughly approve of the purposes of this bill," said Governor Groesbeck.

Isle Royale, the proposed State park, is one of the richest parts of Michigan in its archeological and its aboriginal deposits. It was from Isle Royale that the earliest Indians got the copper they used in their clumsy implements. It is considered extremely probable by scientists that in the earth and rocks of Isle Royale may be uncovered relics of the ages of long ago, when another civilization, or at least another race of men, lived where Michigan is now.

It is to preserve for citizens and students and scholars of Michigan these treasures of scientific and historic interest that the bill is proposed.

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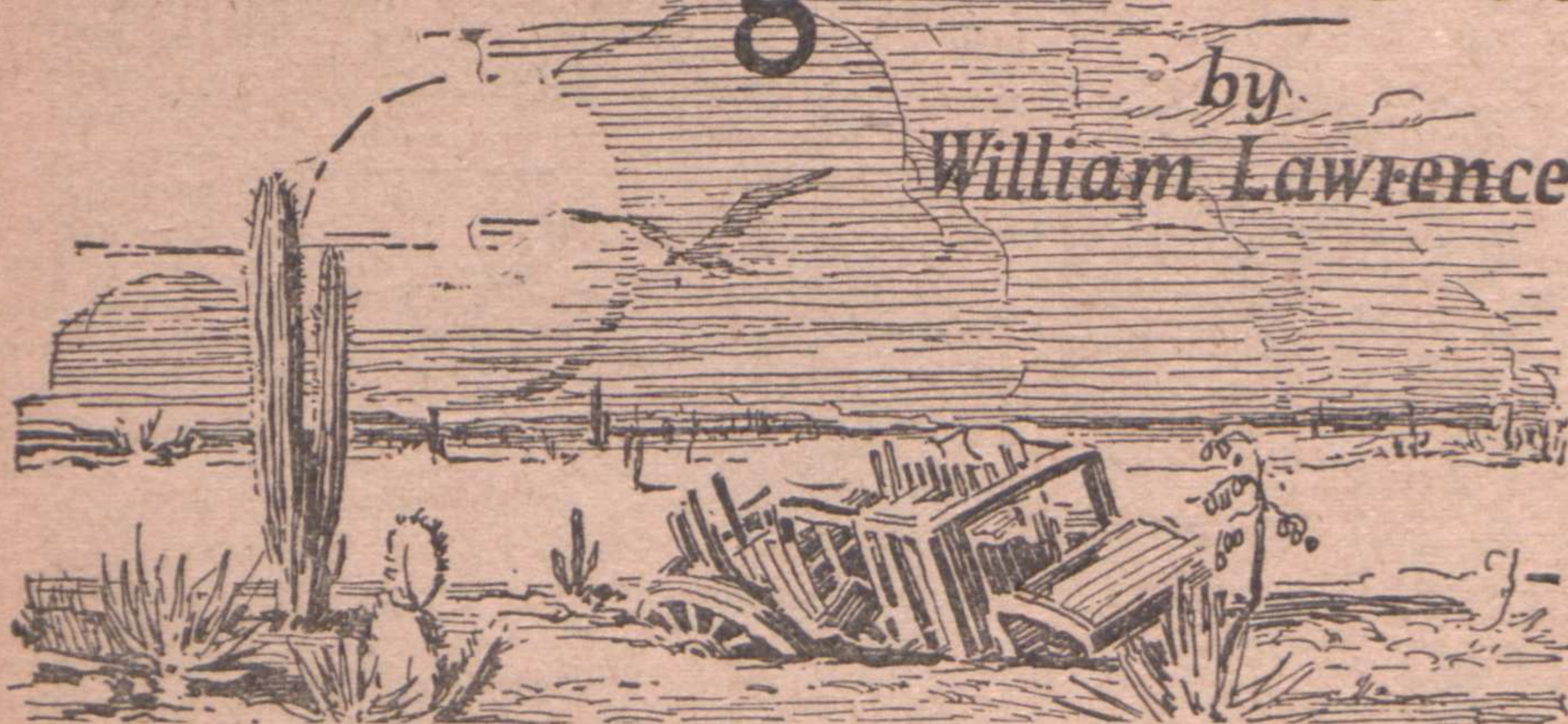
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The Warning of the Desert

by
William Lawrence



THIS is the story of Bill Andrews—plain Bill Andrews. He was twenty-seven years old—married—the father of as fine a baby boy as you have ever seen.

But Bill was just like thousands of other men. He had been forced to leave school and go to work when he was still young.

He had taken the first thing that came along and he had worked as hard as he knew how. But somehow or other, he didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

It was hard—terribly hard, sometimes—to make both ends meet. Sickness came—doctor's bills—the rent was raised—and all that sort of thing.

Above everything else in the world, Bill wanted to go home some night and tell his wife of a raise in salary—of a promotion that would mean a happier, better home.

I wonder if there is a man anywhere who hasn't had that same ambition, that same hope!

But that increase in salary and that promotion never came. Indeed, once or twice Bill came mighty near losing his job.

And then, one night, Bill came across an advertisement that told how men just like himself had gotten out of the rut and had gone ahead—how men with no more education than himself had studied at home in their spare time—how the International Correspondence Schools would come to him and help him to develop his natural ability.

Bill had seen that advertisement and that familiar coupon many, many times before. For two years he had been promising himself that he would cut it out and send it to Scranton. He knew that he ought to do it—that he should at least find out what the I. C. S. could do for him. But he never had.

And he might not have sent in the coupon this time, either, but for the few words under a picture called "The Warning of the Desert":

"On the Plains of Hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who, at the Dawn of Victory, sat down to wait—and waiting, died."

Bill read that over two or three times. "The Plains of Hesitation!" "The Dawn of Victory!" These two phrases kept ringing in his ears. They worked their way into his very soul. So he clipped that coupon, marked it and mailed it to Scranton.

Bill told me the other day that he was surprised how interested he became in his lessons—of the personal interest the teachers at the I. C. S. took in him—how his employers learned about his studying and saw evidence of it in his work.

"The most important moment in my life," says Bill, "was that moment four years ago when I sent in that I. C. S. coupon. And the happiest moment of my life was when I went home with the news of my first real increase in salary and my first real promotion. If I hadn't sent in that coupon I'd still be working at a humdrum job and a small salary."

Won't you let the I. C. S. help you, too? Won't you trade a few hours of your spare time for a good job, a good salary and the comforts that go with it? Then mark the work you like best on the coupon below and mail it to Scranton to-day. That doesn't obligate you in the least, but it will be your first big step toward success. *Do it now!*

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Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.



\$10,000 or DEATH

Millionaire Blair had laughed at the first threat of the blackmailer. And the next night his lumber yard burned to the ground. The mysterious blackmailer was plainly in earnest. His family was desperate, but Blair refused to give in. A \$5,000 reward brought a score of detectives—but not a clue. Then came Wilson, the Finger Print Expert. He examined the death letter. The others had seen only the sinister skull and cross bones. But Wilson saw something else! A few moments in his laboratory. A few more among the files of his Bureau, and he said to the chief, "Pick up Ivan Markaroff. He's your man. Then send the reward to my office." How did he do it? Easy for the finger print expert. He is the leader, the cream of detectives. Almost daily, the papers tell of his marvelous exploits.

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The demand for trained men by government, states, cities, detective agencies, corporations and private bureaus is becoming greater every day. Here is a real opportunity for YOU. Can you imagine a more fascinating line of work than this? Often life and death depend upon finger print evidence—and big rewards go to the expert. Many experts can earn regularly from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per year.

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Large shirt manufacturer wants agents to sell complete line of shirts, pajamas, and nightshirts direct to wearer. Advertised brand—exclusive patterns—easy to sell. No experience or capital required. Entirely new proposition. Write for free samples.
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Your skin can be quickly cleared of Pimples, Blackheads, Acne Eruptions on the face or body, Barbers Itch, Eczema, Enlarged Pores, Oily or Shiny Skin. Write today for my FREE Booklet, "A CLEAR-TONE SKIN," telling how I cured myself after being afflicted for 15 years. \$1000 Cash says I can clear your skin of the above blemishes.
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—WATCH, CHAIN, SIGNET RING and PIN—all four given for selling only 30 cards of Dress Snap-Fasteners at 10c per card. Easily sold. EARN BIG MONEY or PREMIUMS. Get sample lot today—send no money. WE TRUST YOU.
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SHOULD BE IN EVERY HOME

It increases blood circulation, strengthens and soothes the nerves. Brings sleep to the sleepless.
30 DAYS TRIAL

The Vigorous Man or Woman is Leader of All. You cannot realize the benefits derived from this machine except you try it. One treatment will convince you of its extraordinary qualities. If you are a sufferer of paralysis, locomotor ataxia, vertigo, apoplexy, headaches, neuralgia, nervousness, general weakness, neuritis, rheumatism, lumbago or hardening arteries, be sure to investigate this machine. Takes the place of exercise. Gives your muscles firm elasticity; be neither fat nor thin.

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Do you realize what this machine means to one wanting in vital strength, or suffering from a goitre, nervous debility, insomnia, prostate gland trouble or varicose veins? Remember, this machine is not a vibrator, but a genuine health helping, life prolonging apparatus.

Cheapest Way to Go
to work or school and recreation is on a Ranger bicycle. Choice of 44 styles and sizes. 30 Days' Free Trial. Express prepaid.
12 Months to Pay If desired. Saved time and carfare easily meets the small payments.
Tires Parts, equipment—at half usual prices. Send no money. Write for our remarkable factory prices and marvelous terms.
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She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat



Thousands of overfat people have greatly reduced their weight and attained a normal figure by following the advice of many others who use and recommend Marmola Prescription Tablets. These harmless little fat reducers are prepared in tablet form from the same ingredients that formerly composed the famous Marmola Prescription for fat reduction.

If you are too fat, you owe it to yourself to give these fat reducers a fair trial. All the better drug stores the world over sell Marmola Prescription Tablets at one dollar per package. Ask your druggist for them or send one dollar to the Marmola Co., 304 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich. and secure a package of these tablets. They are harmless and reduce your weight without going through long sieges of tiresome exercise and starvation diet. If you are too fat try this today.

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Habit Cured or No Pay

Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff Guaranteed. Harmless. Complete treatment sent on trial. Costs \$1.00 if it cures. Nothing if it fails.
SUPERBA CO. M-21, Baltimore, Md.

GOITRE Pay When Well

I have an honest, proven remedy for goitre (big neck). It checks the growth at once, reduces the enlargement, stops pain and distress and relieves in a little while. Pay when well. Tell your friends about this. Write me at once. **DR. ROCK.**
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Then wear this Mystic Serpent. Replica of Ancient Hindu charm against evil spirits, sickness, spells, and symbol of GOOD LUCK in love, business, games. Heavy, weird and startling. Genuine 14-Karat gold shell, 3 year guarantee. Men and Women. Secret "formula for luck" FREE. Send measure (string tied around finger.) **ALI K. BABA, Box 55, 116 Str. Sta., New York.** Pay \$2.27 and postage to postman on delivery.

30 day TRIAL

Fine STROP FREE

We will send you a STERLING razor on 30 day trial. If satisfactory, costs \$1.67. If not, costs nothing. Fine Double Swing Horsehide Strop FREE.
Sterling Company Dept. 306 Baltimore, Md.

COINS OF EARLY PIONEERS FOUND IN GRAVEL PITS

Scores of coins, believed to have been used in this vicinity by Indian traders about 1825, are being found daily in gravel pits near Fon Du Lac, Wis. Harking back to the days when Fon du Lac was not even a hamlet, but part of an Indian territory whose only white inhabitants were a few scattered traders, George Treleven, County Highway Commissioner, is exhibiting a collection of silver and copper coins which have been found in gravel pits.

Some of the coins are as large as a silver dollar and others as large as a 25-cent piece. On some of the coins is the inscription, Georgius III D. G. Rex, and on others is inscribed Hibernia. Old settlers here declare that years before this part of the State was settled there was a small trading post at a spring near the present site of Johnsburg. The spring has disappeared.

Although it is not uncommon for early settlement relics to be found in outlying parts of the country, this is the first time such a considerable number of coins reminiscent of the first white invasion have been reported.

LITTLE ADS

Write to Riker & King, Advertising Offices, 1133 Broadway, New York City, or 29 East Madison Street, Chicago, for particulars about advertising in this magazine.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS WANTED—BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys Gold Initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 171, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS—90c an hour to advertise and distribute samples to consumer. Write quick for territory and particulars. American Products Co., 8460 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

LADIES, do your own hemstitching and picoting; attachment fits any machine sent collect \$2.50. Agents wanted. Colorado Attachment Co., Box 2210, Denver, Colo.

FOR SALE

LAND OPPORTUNITY! \$10 to \$50 down starts you on 20, 40, 80 ac. near thriving city in lower Mich.; bal. long time. Learn how we help you get a farm home. Write today for big booklet free. Swigart Land Co., M-1268 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

HELP WANTED

BE A DETECTIVE. Opportunity for men and women for secret investigation in your district. Write C. T. Ludwig, 521 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

DETECTIVES NEEDED EVERYWHERE—Work home or travel. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write Captain Wagner, 1963 Broadway, New York.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS earn big salaries; needed everywhere! Particulars free. Landscape Gardener, 425 Union League Building, Los Angeles, California.

SILVER MIRRORS, HEADLIGHTS, TABLEWARE. REPLATE stoves, jewelry, brass beds. Dependable plans free. Clarence Sprinkle, Dept. 73, Marion, Indiana.

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STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, etc., are wanted for publication. Submit MSS. or write Literary Bureau, 515 Hannibal, Mo.

PATENTS

INVENTIONS commercialized. Patented or unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 229, St. Louis, Mo.

PERSONAL

ASTROLOGY—STARS TELL LIFE'S STORY. Send birthdate and dime for trial reading. Eddy, Westport St., 3927 Kenwood Suite 73, Kansas City, Mo.

ATTRACTIVE SOUTHERN WIDOW, with \$40,000, wants husband. I-Box 35, Toledo, Ohio.

BEST, LARGEST MATRIMONIAL CLUB in Country. Established 19 Years. Thousands Wealthy wishing Early Marriage. Confidential. Free. The Old Reliable Club. Mrs. Wrubel, Box 26, Oakland, Calif.

BUSINESS MAN, 45, worth \$50,000, wishes correspondent. V-Box 35, League, Toledo, Ohio.

DO YOU WANT NEW FRIENDS? Write Betty Lee, Inc., 4254 Broadway, New York City. Stamp appreciated.

GIRL, 20, worth \$100,000, wants gentleman correspondent. T-Box 35, League, Toledo, Ohio.

HUNDREDS seeking marriage. If sincere enclose stamp. Mrs. F. Willard, 2928 Broadway, Chicago, Illinois.

IF LONESOME exchange jolly letters with beautiful ladies and wealthy gentlemen. Eva Moore, Box 908, Jacksonville, Fla. (Stamp).

IF YOU WANT A WEALTHY, LOVING WIFE, write Violet Rays, Dennison, Ohio. Enclose stamped envelope.

PERSONAL—Continued

LADY FARMER, 35, worth \$60,000, wants husband. N-Box 263, Club, Zanesville, Ohio.

LONELY LITTLE FLAPPER, tired living alone, very wealthy, wants marriage. I dare you write! B-166, Mission Unity Club, San Francisco, Calif. (Stamp please).

LONESOME WIDOWS—Get busy, write me, marry wealthy. Mr. Hyde, Box 305, (166), San Francisco.

LOOK WHOSE HERE! Princess OKIE world famous horoscopes. Get your's today. Don't delay. Send full birthdate and 10c, K. Okie, 209 West 139th St., New York, N. Y.

WINTER in Florida. Marry pretty maiden worth \$30,000. Box 55, Oxford, Fla.

MARRIAGE PAPER—20th year. Big issue with descriptions, photos, names and addresses. 25 cents. No other fee. Sent sealed. Box 2265 R, Boston, Mass.

MARRY—Free photographs, directory and descriptions of wealthy members. Pay when married. New Plan Co., Dept. 36, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY IF LONELY; "Home Maker"; hundreds rich, confidential; reliable; years experience; descriptions free. "The Successful Club", Box 556, Oakland, California.

MARRY: MANY WORTH \$1,000 to \$200,000. WAITING Lists, particulars, sealed, free. Write SMITH, Box 3125K, Portland, Oregon.

MARRY—MARRIAGE DIRECTORY with photos and descriptions free. Pay when married. The Exchange, Dept. 545, Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY RICH—World's leading correspondence Club for lonely people. Many worth to \$400,000. Quick results guaranteed. Confidential list FREE. Honorable Ralph Hyde, 166, San Francisco.

MARRY: Thousands congenial people, worth from \$1,000 to \$50,000 seeking early marriage, descriptions, photos, introductions free. Sealed. Either sex. Send no money. Address Standard Cor. Club, Grayslake, Ill.

WINTER in Florida, marry pretty little maiden, wealthy. Box 55, Oxford, Fla.

SIXTH AND SEVENTH BOOKS OF MOSES. Egyptian secrets. Black art, other rare books. Catalog free. Star Book Co., 4R23, 122 Federal St., Camden, N. J.

WHOM SHOULD YOU MARRY? We'll tell you. Send 30c and birth date to Character Studies, 1515 Masonic Temple, New York City.

WIDOW, 55, worth \$50,000, wants conscientious husband. S-Box 35, League, Toledo, Ohio.

WINTER in Florida. Marry charming widow worth \$40,000. Box 55, Oxford, Fla.

WOULD you write a wealthy, pretty girl? (stamp). Lois Sproul, Sta. H., Cleveland, Ohio.

YOUNG AND PRETTY GIRL, worth \$25,000, will marry. (E-B.), B-1022, Wichita, Kansas.

YOUNG LADY, worth \$50,000, pretty, will marry. G-Box 350, Club, Cimarron, Kans.

SONGWRITERS

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG—We compose music. Submit your poems to us at once. New York Melody Corporation, 405 Fitzgerald Bldg., New York.

TOBACCO HABIT

TOBACCO or Snuff Habit cured or no pay. \$1 if cured. Remedy sent on trial. Superba Co., PC., Baltimore, Md.

U. S. MINTS

The letter "D" appearing on United States coins indicates the mint from which it came, and when appearing on coins prior to 1835, the letter indicates that the coin was struck at Dahlonega, Ga., though after that date, the mint at Denver having been established, the letter "D" was also placed on coins of that mint. There are now three coinage mints in the United States; one at Philadelphia, established in 1792; one at San Francisco, established in 1855, and one at Denver, established in 1862. There are also mints in New Orleans, established in 1835; at Carson City, established in 1869, but both of these mints have been reduced to assay offices, of which there are now eight in the United States, located in New Orleans, New York, Deadwood, Helena, Seattle, Salt Lake and Carson City. The branch mint which was established in 1835 at Charlotte, N. C., and the mint at Dahlonega, Ga., established in 1838, have both been discontinued. The coins from the Philadelphia mint bear no mark. Those coined at New Orleans bear the mark "O." Those issued at Charlotte are marked "C"; those at San Francisco, "S", and at Carson City "CC."

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Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal.

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.



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Soft as velvet—easy to apply—Inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely FREE.

Write name on Coupon and send TODAY. **FREE** Plapao Co., 1738 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

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Sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. My treatment is a simple and efficient fat reducer. It has often reduced at the rate of a pound a day. Let me send you proof at my expense.

DR. R. NEWMAN, Licensed Physician, State N. Y., 286 Fifth Ave., N. Y., Desk N-1019

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\$2 to \$500 EACH paid for hundreds of Old Coins dated before 1895. Keep ALL old or odd money. Send 10 cts. for New Ill's Coin Value Book, 4x6. You may have valuable coins. Get Posted. We pay cash.

CLARKE COIN CO. Ave. 13, Le Roy, N. Y.

